WESTERN ADVENTURE AND SPORT STORIES

20c

A CLAYTON MAGAZINE

Ace-High MAGAZINE

DAKOTA, DEATH DEALER

HAIR-TRIGGER SHOOTING *vs.* AMBUSHED TREACHERY IN A BOOK-LENGTH WESTERN NOVEL BY

RALPH CUMMINS

PADGETT OF HELL'S ROOST

A LEAD-BLAZING YARN BY

RIPTON CROY

SECOND OCTOBER NUMBER

For a lasting and refreshing treat after smoking or when you can't smoke.

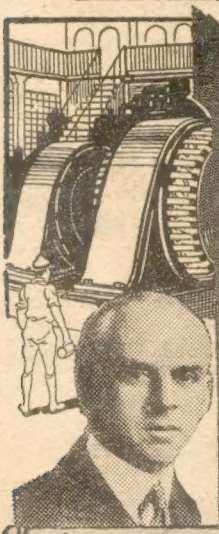
Flavored with the juice of fresh mint leaves, WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT has a tang and zest to brighten your whole day!

It keeps teeth clean and white, breath sweet, soothes the throat, allays thirst and aids digestion.

After Every Meal

H85

Thousands of my boys make $70 to $200 a week in ELECTRICITY



INVESTIGATE

So can you.

Now you earn $20—or $25—or $30 a week. In the same 6 days, as a "Cooke" Trained electrical man, you could be making $70 to $200 a week,—and do it easier—not work half so hard.

Why, then, remain in a small-pay, no-future job? You can't make Big Money there. Get into Electricity. That's where the big money is being made, and that's where the big money always will be made, because Electricity is the biggest and fastest growing industry in the world.

I'll Train You At Home

I'll train you at home,—in your spare time. You work just as you are working now—at your same old job. But you learn Electricity every day, in an easy, simple, unforgetable way—by doing. And—

You Earn As You Learn

That's the way I teach Electricity—so that you can make extra money as you go along. That's why my students are successful. That's why the "Cooke trained man is the Big-Pay Man", everywhere, and always. $40 a week is just an ordinary salary in Electricity. $70 to $200 a week is what thousands of "Cooke" Trained Men are earning.

Money Back If Not Satisfied

That's what I agree to do. And you're to be the judge and jury, all in one. If you're not satisfied you get your money back—every cent of it.

And back of me in this agreement stands the Chicago Engineering Works, a $2,000,000 Illinois Corporation.

Nothing Like "Cooke" Training

Don't confuse other Training with mine. Don't be satisfied with anything but "Cooke" Training, the Training with 10,000 boosters. There is nothing like it anywhere. It stands by itself—alone in this field. This is the Training that Electrical men are praising—the Training that Electrical concerns recommend to their employees,—the Training that a great engineering association has endorsed 100 per cent, after a thorough investigation. It's the Training for you.

If You Are Earning Less Than $70 A Week — Investigate

Don't wait a minute! Find out today why "The Cooke Trained Man is the Big-Pay Man", everywhere! Find out how "Cooke" Training will help you boost your pay! Mail coupon right now for my Big, FREE Book of Facts. Read the whole wonderful story. See the Six Big Working-Outfits I give you without extra charge. See the hundreds of pictures, the proofs, the Big-Pay letters of other "Cooke" Trained Men. Get this great free Book. Send for it today. Clip, sign, and mail coupon right NOW!

L. L. COOKE,
Chief Instruction Engineer
L. L. COOKE SCHOOL OF ELECTRICITY
Dept. 147
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

FREE BOOK COUPON - Mail It

L. L. COOKE, Chief Instruction Engineer, Dept. 147, 2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Send me, FREE and prepaid, your Big Book "Secrets of Success in Electricity," with all details about your Home Study Course in Electricity.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Residents of Canada send coupon to R. A. Farrow, Special Representative, 7 Medbury Lane, East, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

The "Cooke" Trained Man is the Big Pay Man

Twice-a-Month—Out on the 3rd and the 18th

ACE-HIGH MAGAZINE

W. M. CLAYTON, *Publisher* DAVID REDSTONE, *Editor*

The Clayton Wedge on a Magazine Guarantees:

That the stories therein are clean, interesting, vivid; by leading authors of the day and purchased under conditions approved by the Authors' League of America;

That magazines bearing this mark are manufactured in Union shops by American workmen;

That each newsdealer and agent is insured a fair profit;

That an intelligent censorship governs their advertising pages.

The other Clayton magazines are: Ranch Romances, Cowboy Stories, The Danger Trail *and* Clues.

Vol. XXXVIII SECOND OCTOBER NUMBER No. 4

A Complete Novel

DAKOTA, DEATH-DEALER ..... Ralph Cummins 489

Dakota, one-time killer-gunman, stacks up his chips on the side of law and order.

Short Stories

THE RED TRUMP ..... George Rosenberg 534

Buck had a world of hope tied up in that snug ranch in the Siskiyous.

THE MAN IN SIDEWINDER CANYON ..... Albert William Stone 541

Going over a mile of ground in Sidewinder Canyon is like tramping fifty in any place you can name off-hand.

FOR PETE'S SAKE ..... Bud Jones 551

"Pistol Pete has got 'swift' which makes Walter Johnson's fast ball look like a stuffed shirt threw up there by a hat check girl."

BLOOD FOR GOLD ..... John Beames 559

The road to gold is a grim path; it is spattered with the blood of its defenders.

HARDY MEETS HIS WATERLOO ..... Glenn A. Connor 568

The sense of responsibility doesn't leave a sheriff as fast as he can remove the badge from his vest.

PADGETT OF HELL'S ROOST ..... Ripton Croy 575

"Cleanup" Jess Padgett, cowboy and two-gun artist, visits New York.

GUNS OF THE GRASS HOG ..... Clee Woods 585

Karney's saloon learns a new way of playing poker.

A Serial Novel

THE TWO-GUN ROMULUS ..... W. Bert Foster 593

Homer of the Lazy D in a six-part serial novel—Part Five.

Special Features

JUDGE COLT ..... C. M. Lindsay 486

A Western Ballad

IN THE NEXT ISSUE 574

CURIOUS INVENTIONS 592

THE COUNTRY STORE 609

If you wish to exchange something you have but don't want for something you want that some one else has, here's the place to do it.

Yearly Subscription $4.00 **This Issue Dated October 18, 1927** **Single Copies 20 Cents**

Issued semi-monthly by Readers' Publishing Corporation, 799 Broadway, New York. Fred Schiverea, Jr., President; William E. Harrs, Treasurer. Entered as second-class matter July 8, 1921, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under act of March 3, 1879. Title registered as a Trade-Mark in the U. S. Patent Office. Copyright, 1927, by Ace-High Magazine. Member Newsstand Group; Men's List—For advertising rates address E. R. Crowe & Co., Inc., 25 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, or 225 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

"He Used to Belong to Our Crowd"

"He's the only one of the old gang who made good"

"THAT's Bob Thompson, sales manager for Boyd & Snyder. They say he makes $15,000 a year.

"Yet it hasn't been long since he wasn't making more than $35 a week. I know, because he used to belong to our crowd. There were six of us and there was hardly a night that we didn't bowl or shoot pool or play cards together.

"Lots of times we would sit down and talk about earning more money, but that's all it ever amounted to—*talk!* Bob was the only one who really did anything.

"'I'm through wasting my spare time like this,' he said one night. 'I'm going to take up a course with the International Correspondence Schools and try to make something of myself before it is too late.'

"We didn't see much of Bob after that—he'd always laugh and say he was 'too busy' when we'd ask him to join a party.

"Look at him now. A big man in a big job. Making five times as much as I'll ever make. Oh, what a fool I was not to send in that I. C. S. coupon when he did!"

Are you like this man? Are you standing still while other men get ahead of you? Are you idling away your time in small and fleeting pleasures instead of building for the future?

The best way for you to advance in business and in life is to take up a course of home-study with the International Correspondence Schools as so many other men have done.

Jesse G. Vincent was a toolmaker before he enrolled with the I. C. S. He is now Vice-president of the Packard Motor Car Company. Walter Chrysler, President of the Chrysler Corporation, is also a former I. C. S. student. So is "Eddie" Rickenbacker, the famous flying ace, who is now Vice-president and Director of Sales for the Rickenbacker Motor Company.

An I. C. S. course enabled Fred W. Southworth to leave a poorly paying job that he had held *for twenty years* and get a position as a salesman. In six months he increased his salary more than 300 per cent.

George A. Grieble is another man who lifted himself out of the rut by spare-time study. He was a stone cutter earning $15 a week when he enrolled with the I. C. S. He now has his own architectural and engineering business in Cleveland and his income is "between $10,000 and $15,000 a year."

If the I. C. S. can help these men to get out of the rut and make good, it can help you too. If it can raise the salaries of other men, it can raise yours! At least find out how.

The way is easy! Just mark the work you like best in the coupon below. Then mail it today.

This doesn't obligate you in any way, but it brings you information that may start you on a successful career. This is your Opportunity. Don't pass it by.

Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2123-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X in the list below:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Organization	☐ Better Letters
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Business Law	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Banking and Finance Management	☐ English
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)	☐ Civil Service
☐ Nicholson-Prouty Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Private Secretary	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Architects' Blueprints
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Metallurgy ☐ Mining	☐ Agriculture ☐ Navigation
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

"GET ON Uncle Sam's PAYROLL"

Post Office Clerks
City Mail Carriers
Rural Mail Carriers
Railway Postal Clerks
Bookkeepers **Stenographers**
Income Tax Auditors
Clerks in Government Offices
at WASHINGTON, D. C., and ELSEWHERE
Prohibition Investigators

$1140.00 to $3300.00 a Year

These are steady positions. Strikes, poor business conditions, lockouts or politics will not affect them. U. S. Government employees get their pay for full twelve months every year. There is not such thing as "HARD TIMES" in the U. S. Government Service.

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS

Railway Postal Clerks now get $1900 the first year, being paid on the first and fifteenth of each month. $79.00 each pay day. Their pay is quickly increased, $100 and $150 a year, the maximum being $2700 a year. $112.50 each pay day. They get extra allowance for hotel expenses when away from home.

PAID VACATIONS

Railway Postal Clerks, like all Government employees, are given a yearly vacation of 15 working days (about 18 days). On runs they usually work three days and have three days off duty, or in the same proportion. During this off duty and vacation, their pay continues just as though they were working. When they grow old they are retired with a pension. As Railway Postal Clerks are continually traveling, they have an excellent chance to see the country.

"Due to your well prepared training, I received my appointment eight days after my name was placed on the register."
David W. Tucker."

CITY MAIL CARRIERS—POST OFFICE CLERKS

Clerks and Carriers get $1700 the first year regular, and automatically increase $100 a year to $2100 with further increase to $2300. They also have 15 days vacation. Examinations are frequently held. City residence is unnecessary.

USE THE COUPONS

Fill out the coupon or coupons. Tear off and mail today—now, at once. DO IT NOW—This investment of two cents for a postage stamp may result in you getting a big-pay Life Job.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. N 262
Rochester, N. Y.

The following are not U. S. Government Positions, but are BIG PAY POSITIONS for which we can train you in a few interesting minutes work daily, in your own home.

MAIL THIS COUPON for valuable book, FREE SAMPLE LESSONS and full particulars regarding the position checked.

—Scientific Selling. (Earn $3000-$7000 year
—Gown Designing—Making (Earn $1200-$3000 year)
—Millinery Designing—Making—Selling ($1200-$3000 year)
—Auto Repairing—Engineering ($1500-$6000 year)
—Electrical Engineering (Elementary) ($2000-$6000 year)

Name .....

Address .....

Use This Coupon Before You Mislay It—Write or Print Plainly.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. N 261
Rochester, N. Y.

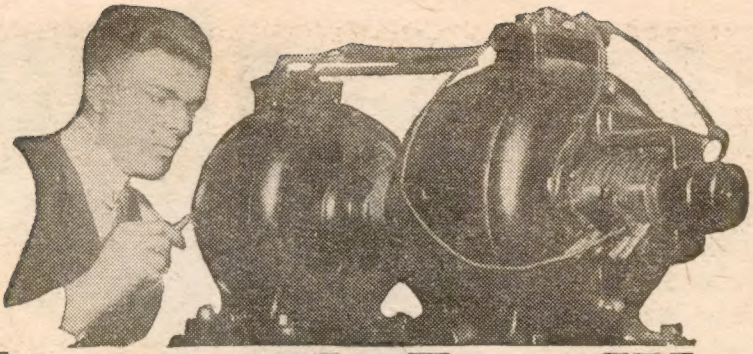
Rush to me, entirely free of charge (1) a full description of the position checked below; (2) Send particulars telling how to get appointment; (3) Free copy of 32-page illustrated book, "U. S. Government Positions and How to Get Them," with list of positions now obtainable.

Railway Postal Clerk.....($1900-$2700)
Post Office Clerk.....($1700-$2300)
City Mail Carrier.....($1700-$2100)
Rural Mail Carrier.....($2100-$3300)
Clerk in Government Offices.....($1140-$1860)
Prohibition Investigators.....($1800-$3000)

Name .....

Address .....

Use This Coupon Before You Mislay It—Write or Print Plainly.



Amazingly Easy Way to get into ELECTRICITY

Don't spend your life waiting for $5 raises in a dull, hopeless job. Now . . . and forever . . . say good-bye to 25 and 35 dollars a week. Let me teach you how to prepare for positions that lead to $50, $60 and on up to $200 a week in Electricity—NOT by correspondence, but by an amazing way to teach that makes you a Real Electrician in 90 days! Getting into electricity is far easier than you imagine!

Learn Without Lessons in 90 DAYS

LACK of experience—age, or advanced education bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have. That's why I have worked out my astonishing offers. **FREE**

Employment Service

I will allow your railroad fare to Chicago, and assist you to part time work while training. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained . . . on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations . . . everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting . . . full-sized . . . in full operation every day!

No Books—No Printed Lessons

No dull books, no baffling charts . . . all real actual work . . . building real batteries . . . winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how we help to make you a master electrician, teaching you far more than the average ordinary electrician ever knows and fitting you to hold big jobs after graduation.

Prepare For Jobs Like This

Here are a few of hundreds of positions open to Coyne-trained men. Our free employment bureau gives you lifetime employment service.

Armature Expert	$100 a Week
Substation Operator	$65 a Week
Auto Electrician	$110 a Week
Inventor	Unlimited
Maintenance Engineer	$150 a Week
Service Station Owner	$200 a Week
Radio Expert	$100 a Week

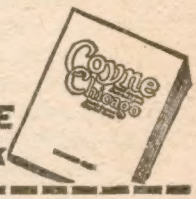
Jobs, Pay, Future

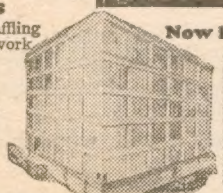
Don't worry about a job, Coyne training settles the job question for life. Big demand for Coyne trained men. Our employment department gives you lifetime service. Two weeks after graduation, Clyde F. Hart got a position as electrician with the Great Western Railroad at over $100 a week. That's not unusual. We can point to many Coyne men making up to $600 a month. $60 a week is only the beginning of your opportunity. You can go into radio, battery or automotive electrical business for yourself and make up to $15,000 a year.

Get the Facts

Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 28 years old—Coyne training is tested—proven beyond all doubt—endorsed by many large electrical concerns. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book of 150 photographs . . . facts . . . jobs . . . salaries . . . opportunities. Tells you how many earn expenses while training and how we assist our graduates in the field. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

Get this FREE Book





Now in Our New Home

This is our new fireproof, modern home wherein is installed thousands of dollars' worth of the newest and most modern Electrical equipment of all kinds. We now have the largest amount of floor space devoted to the exclusive teaching of practical electricity in the world. Every comfort and convenience has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. LEWIS, Pres., Dept. 77-66
500 S. PAULINA ST. Founded 1899 CHICAGO, ILL.

Mr. H. C. Lewis, Pres.
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 77-66
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of your Railroad Fare to Chicago offer, Free Employment service, Radio and Automotive Courses without extra cost, and how I can "earn while learning." I understand I will not be bothered by any salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

JUDGE COLT

By C. M. Lindsay

THERE was durned little Blackstone learnin'
In the days when the West was young!
No lawyers with eloquence churnin'
To say when a man should be hung!
The *only* law west o' the Pecos,
As had even a strangle holt,
For Chinamen, white men or negroes,
Was old—Judge—Colt!

There was no reversin' decisions
As come from a forty-five!
No legal lights seekin' revisions,
On which shysters nowadays thrive;
No hemmin' nor hawin' in front o'
The bench; like a thunderbolt,
The verdict was handed out pronto,
With old—Judge—Colt!

Court wa'n't never long in convenin'—
Formalities took a back seat;
An' precedent hadn't much meanin'
When Rangers was ridin' their beat!
Then the gleam of a quick-drawn "cutter"
Was law to the dumbest dolt!
An' nobody *dared* to mutter
'Gainst old—Judge—Colt!

The rustlers, the ruthless brand-blotchers,
Badmen as was goin' the pace—
They might be durned tough an' "ten-notchers";
But they'd wilt when brought face to face
With "hizzoner." They knew there wa'n't *nothin'*
Could give *his* pronouncements a jolt!
An' *appeals*—they wa'n't worth a *muffin*
With old—Judge—Colt!

Guaranteed Twin Service for Ambitious Men!

T *Training Preparing you for a better job and a Raise in Pay - - - -*

E *Employment Service Placing you in it, or money refunded!*

O. C. MILLER
Director Extension Work

The American School

is the first in the home-study field to recognize the need of guaranteeing its courses with a money-back contract, if the training fails to accomplish the benefits you expect. Thus all risk and doubt are eliminated—**either the training will help you to a better job and a raise in pay or it will cost you nothing.** To better carry out this important service, we maintain a **National** employment department which keeps in touch with the employers of Draftsmen all over the U. S. All this without extra charge to our students and graduates.

Professional Outfit Given!

You will naturally expect the American School to give you the best kind of instruments and tools with the best kind of training. This outfit is good enough to use professionally after you finish your training. Mail coupon for description.

Come into Drafting!

Learn drafting—how to *make* and *read* plans, and the doors of opportunity in all mechanical, building, and engineering lines swing open for you! There are more well-paid Drafting jobs open today than in any other one profession or trade. There's a variety, a fascination to Drafting that will grip you. No other work is so interesting, *so well paid*—no other field offers equal opportunities for quick promotion.

If You Are Now Earning Less than $40 a Week

I guarantee to *prepare* you for a fine drafting position, right in your home, in your spare time; then I guarantee to help you find such a position paying at least 50% *more than you earn today*, within 60 days after you complete this training, or I will refund small amount you pay for tuition. We make this agreement to prove this instruction *will* make you a *real Draftsman*. Back of this guarantee are the entire resources and reputation of this million dollar institution.

O. C. Miller

O. C. MILLER
Director Extension Work

The Draftsman is the Boss of the Works!

Destroy blue-prints and *plans*, and the wheels of all Industry will stop until new ones can be made. Every move of every workman on the job is *controlled* by the Draftsman through his plans. Railroads, public works, buildings of a hundred sorts, machinery, electricity, automobiles—all manufacturing and construction *start* on the Drafting table! That's the kind of work to get into, friend. Where you have the same chance as anybody else to make a *quick success!*

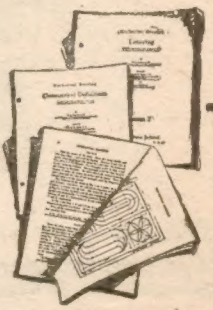
3 DRAFTING Lessons FREE!

—to prove you can learn at home in spare time!

You'll be surprised how *quickly* you can learn Drafting by our new one-step-at-a-time method. We start you off by doing actual Drafting room jobs from the very beginning. Before you know it, you are batting out professional plans like a veteran. Get the first three lessons—the coupon brings them. Do *them*. Test your ability to master Drafting at home. Without cost or obligation.

The American School

Dept. D-768 Drexel Ave. and 58th, Chicago



O. C. MILLER, Director Extension Work
American School, Dept. D-768, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago.

Your offer to send me three lessons free and facts about the opportunities in Drafting and about your course, looks good to me. It is understood I am not obligated in any way in making this request.

Name _____

Address _____

Occupation _____ *Age* _____

IT'S THE *YOUNGER CROWD* THAT SETS THE STANDARD!

GO to the younger crowd if you want the *right* word on what to wear or drive or smoke. And notice, please, that the particular cigarette they call their own today is one that you've known very well for a very long time.

FATIMA

What a whale of a difference just a few cents make!

DAKOTA, DEATH-DEALER

By Ralph Cummins

Dakota, one-time killer-gunman, stacks up his chips on the side of law and order in this swift-blazing novel of the West.

CHAPTER I

A Holdup Fizzles

WHEN Andy Clausen left his jail office on Monday morning and climbed aboard the Sheridan stage, the grizzled old sheriff looked much as if he had been living on a diet of horseshoe nails and was going to Sheridan for a major operation.

When he returned to Wardance three days later, hopped spryly down from beside the stage driver and bustled into the Red River Bank, Sheriff Clausen's appearance completed a perfect example of "before and after taking." A casual observer would have said that apple pie had been getting in its work on the sheriff's disposition. His round, leathery face was all a-grin, his blue eyes were crinkled with crow's feet, and he had a cheery word for everybody.

After a moment of earnest conversation with Pete Barenden, banker and general big man of Wardance, Clausen crossed the street to the jail, a square stone structure which appeared to have been built as

a sort of brace for the ramshackle frame courthouse. In the sheriff's office in a front corner of the jail the home-coming officer found Limpy Morgan, the jailor.

" 'Lo, Limpy," called Clausen jovially to the rheumatic old man. "How's every little thing?"

"Looks like everything's ace-high with you," mumbled the jailor. "You been smokin' hop?"

"Vacation done me good," chuckled the sheriff, tossing coat and belt aside and flopping into the cushioned chair at his desk. "I hear Spike Sevreen pulled one whilst I was gone."

"He did that! They's a letter there for you from that bank feller up at Donneyville. I bet that'll take the grin offen you."

But it didn't, although the letter was a scorching thing, sarcastically informing Sheriff Clausen that the Spike Sevreen gang had cleaned out the Donneyville bank, and that depositors were being referred to the sheriff. Andy Clausen chuckled as he read the letter.

"Kinda het up, ain't they? Well, we'll fix that—an' ev'rything else. Any other news?"

"Only Al Carpenter an' his ol' woman comin' in sixteen times a day wantin' to know have we done anything about their kid."

" 'At's too bad," muttered Clausen, sobering. "Dang shame. They heerd any more from Spike about that?"

"Two-three more notes. Spike holds out for fifteen thousand for the boy. Al's figgerin' to dig up the money off Barenden. He went to see that banker yesta'd'y."

"An' I tol' Al to set tight," sniffed the sheriff. "Well, I'm fixin' things. Andy Clausen may be gittin' old, but he's still got a good head."

"You shore must 'a' got that head fixed in Sheridan," remarked the jailor. "Yore mouth was clean down under yore chin when you left."

"I ribbed up suthin'," retorted Clausen. "I'll show Spike Sevreen he can't raid this country an' then slip acrost the state line an' laugh at me. Say—what's that funny little white-head over on Black Jake's porch?"

"Name it an' take it," snorted Morgan. "Come in on the stage yestad'y. I tried to talk to him—or it—this mornin', but I couldn't savvy his lingo. He's from back East somewhere. I don't like the way he's been sizin' up that bank."

Sheriff Clausen looked again at the undersized, pasty-faced man on the saloon porch. The stranger was dressed in a layout utterly foreign to the cow country: low tan shoes, lurid hose, crumpled checkerboard trousers and a long coat of vivid hue. His headgear was the like never seen in Wyoming before. Caps were worn in the rangeland in winter, but they were heavy woolen or fur affairs, with ear tabs. The thing that almost covered this stranger's white hair was small and floppy, with a long visor that was pulled well down over the wizened face.

"Better we git him outa town," said the sheriff. "Looks like he might be one of them tough eggs from New York or Chicago. I'll tend to him after a while. Jest now"—he peered up the street at a horseman riding in on a white-footed bay pony—"I got a little job on."

Limpy Morgan, relieved from office duty by the return of his chief, shuffled out through the jail toward the stable. The sheriff buckled on his belt and adjusted his six-gun to its proper place in front of his right thigh. Then he cocked his big black hat over his left eye and gave grinning survey to the jaunty rider coming down the street.

This young puncher would have commanded feminine attention and admiration, and some men would have envied him his striking appearance. He was fancily garbed in beaded boots, gray trousers and checkered shirt, and wore a big white hat far back on tawny curling hair. His very good-looking features were a perfect match for his rather dandified range garb and the ornate trappings of his white-footed bay. His smooth cheeks were pink, his hazel eyes were masked by long lashes, his smiling lips formed a cupid's bow.

"Doggone if he ain't good!" chuckled

Clausen. "Wasn't that I knowed the tiger inside, I'd say he was some dude kid from back East."

The boyish rider's guileless eyes scanned the saloon porch on his right, swung to the front of the courthouse, came carelessly to the Red River Bank that stood directly across from the jail. Apparently because of the spot of shade in front of the bank, the young cowboy swerved aside to the bank hitch rail. He dismounted easily, flipping his reins over his pony's head, fingered a small knife from his pocket and split a sliver from a post. Whittling at this sliver, he glanced over his shoulder at the jail, then walked up the steps toward the bank entrance.

Sheriff Clausen, chuckling like a boy who was on the inside of some joke, looked quickly up and down the street. Half a dozen saddled horses stood dejectedly at the various hitch rails. In front of Pete's Livery Stable beyond the bank, three men were breaking a pair of wild colts to a buckboard. Several punchers lolled in the shade of porches. Clausen observed that the little stranger had disappeared from Black Jake's porch.

"I'll hafta ship that white-head outa town," muttered the sheriff. "He don't look good to me. 'Minds me of that gambler from New York that shot Bill Foster in the back."

Andy Clausen's flash of seriousness lasted only for an instant. He was grinning happily when he glanced again at the dudish youth now standing in the deep shadow of the bank doorway. The young puncher was lifting his lavender neckerchief to cover his face. Clausen chortled gleefully and headed across the dusty street toward the corner of the bank building.

The sheriff had intended to swing round to the front door as soon as the cowboy entered, but sight of a window on the side of the bank caused him to slip along the wall, and raise his head for a cautious peering inside.

At first he saw only Lem Skillen, the teller, standing back of the wicket, his hands above his head. Then Clausen moved to where he could see the nearer side of the grilled partition. The boyish rider, face masked with the neckerchief, was coolly menacing the teller with a gun.

As Clausen backed away, intent now on entering the front door to take the hold-up artist in the rear, he was laughing in a manner that reddened his old face and caused tears to streak down his sunken cheeks. But that was the last laugh that Andy Clausen was to have for some time.

At the very instant that Clausen sighted a man crouching below another window down the bank wall, there came to him a soft spattering sound that was followed by a cannon roar inside the building. From somewhere came a muffled scream. The man at the window beyond the sheriff yelled something in an unintelligible jargon and started to climb in through the window. Clausen observed smoke rising from the man, but he had no gun in his hand.

Andy Clausen was upon the skulker before he recognized him. But as his gun poked the slender figure in the back, and his left hand fastened upon a scrawny neck, Clausen saw that he had captured the white-headed loafer he had seen on Black Jake's porch.

"What yuh think you're doin'?" roared the sheriff. "Git them hands up!"

"Chee, mister!" whined the little man. "I wasn't doin' nuthin'."

"The hell yuh wasn't! How-come yuh're burnin' up?" Clausen released the man's neck to grab at his coat pocket, from which a spiral of smoke was rising. "Uh-huh! Suthin' in there. A gun! Or what is it?" He removed from his prisoner's coat pocket a tiny automatic, so small that it could be hidden in a hand.

"Aw, dat's jest me gat, mister. Chee, mister——"

"Come on, you!" snapped Clausen, becoming conscious now of an uproar inside the bank. "You shore raised hell, you little runt."

Half-dragging his squirmy prisoner, the sheriff hurried to the front door and inside. The fancily bedecked puncher was still holding his gun on the teller, but his attention had gone to a big, well-dressed man who had appeared in a rear doorway.

"Pitch 'em!" Sheriff Clausen, still hanging to the collar of the little man, jabbed his gun into the dandy's back. "High up! Gun back—over your shoulder."

The young puncher shrugged, and obeyed. Clausen secured his gun with the hand that held his own weapon, then gave scowling scrutiny of the plump-faced man standing in the rear.

"What was that shootin', Pete? I thought——"

"That little squirt you got there killed my cashier—Ben Nelson. Shot through the window." The big man's white lips were twitching and his dark eyes fairly blazed. "What kind of a crazy——"

"I'll find out." Clausen jerked the neckerchief mask from his latest prisoner. "Know this feller, Pete?"

"No," replied the banker promptly. "But I've seen that little rat sneaking around."

Men were now crowding into the bank, shouting queries, staring curiously at Clausen's prisoners. The little man who had shot through his pocket with such deadly effect appeared to be cringing, but Andy Clausen did not like the crafty expression in his darting pin-point eyes. The tall young cowboy was smiling, rolling a cigarette, studying with interest his fellow prisoner.

"C'mon, you two," ordered the sheriff, every trace of his apple-pie joy gone. "I'll git you across the street an' find out about this."

"You'd better!" snapped the banker savagely. "I'll be waiting to hear you explain—a lot. You got a good man killed."

"Yuh sure Ben's dead?" muttered Clausen. "How'd it happen?"

"He's dead—right back here." The banker indicated the room behind him. "Ben was in there—I was back in my office. We didn't know a thing about this stick-up until that little devil shot through the window."

The pocket-shooting stranger started to say something, but after a glance at the sheriff, he subsided, twisting his thin lips into an animal snarl. Clausen herded his two prisoners outside, forced a passage through the mob in the street and crossed to the jail. He locked the little man in a cell, then shoved the young puncher to a rear corner. Once out of sight of the crowd in front and out of hearing of the other prisoner, the youthful dandy faced the sheriff. His lips quirked with a scornful smile that was emphasized by the mocking light in his hazel eyes.

"That was good, Andy!" he drawled, his tones biting with sarcasm. "In fact, it was great! Of all the bone-headed fixers I ever run across—you win the strychnine pudding."

"Aw, hell, Dakota," mumbled Clausen. "It wasn't my fault that crazy white-head butted in. I had it all fixed with Pete Barenden jest like we planned."

"Looks like you might have stopped that little cuss," sniffed the late bank robber. "He musta been right in plain sight outside. Well, you've got a cashier killed. Now where's your fancy scheme gone to? Gosh, I hate to be one of them I-told-you-so rannies, but I sure did try to talk you out of that crazy stunt. Huh! Holding up a bank just to make me a rep so I could go work in with that Sevreen gang. I told you I knew that country where they hang out, and that I could go right in there——"

"Don't rub it in," pleaded Clausen. "It was jest a bad break. An' it won't make no difference. Pete can see that this white-head wasn't in on our stunt. We'll go right ahead. Mebbe this'll make it look more natural. I'll fix it so you can make a break to-night an' hit across into the Black Hills."

"I dunno." The man called Dakota produced his small knife and shaved a slender ribbon from a window casing. "There's something funny about this. I've got to find out about that pocket-shooting monkey."

"I can put you in the cell with him," suggested Clausen eagerly. "I wanta know, too. But first let's clean this up. Now, like I told you in Sheridan, this Spike Sevreen has him a dirty gang over in the Black Hills in South Dakota.

"The authorities over there have troubles of their own aroun' the minin' camps, an' won't give me a pleasant smile.

'Sides, I'm in bad with the sheriff over there—I wouldn't let him have a kid who'd shot a gambler. An' Spike plays it keen by doin' all his heavy work over here in Wyoming. He's pulled a good one while I was gone. The bank up at Donneyville."

"And the idee, so I understand it," remarked Dakota, intent on his whittling at the casing, "is for me to work in there and get onto their plans enough so I can tip you off when and where they're going to make a raid."

"That's it. It hadn't oughta be hard. The gang lives right open at a place called Robin's Ranch, about ten miles across the line. Feller named Bones Skelton owns the place. I ain't sure that he's in with the gang, but I hear his Timothy Basin is all cluttered up with russled stock, so it looks bad for ol' Bones."

"Bones Skelton!" The boyish Dakota broke the curl he was shaving from the window casing. "That wouldn't be anybody else but the Hipless Wonder. Well, old Bones and me rode a hard trail together once."

"Friend of yours? That's good. He'll mebbe come in handy. Now, they's another black mare ag'in' Spike Sevreen. About a week ago he pulled a new one—for him. Carried off Al Carpenter's ten-year-ol' kid, Mickey, an' says he wants fifteen thousand to bring him back. Al's got the best ranch in this county, but he's had a couple of bad years an' he's in pretty deep. Still, he's rarin' to dig up that fifteen thousand."

"He ought to make you dig it up," said Dakota. "Gosh, but you have got yourself into a hole, Andy. And expect one lone punch to get you out of all this. You usta take responsibility yourself. Remember when Val Madrid and me helped you with them russlers over on Salt River? You didn't pretend to be smart then. Jest plowed in."

"I'm gittin' old, I guess," sighed Clausen. "Yeh, them was the days. With you an' Val Madrid—— An' now to think that Val's married him a nice girl an' settled down."

"I was with Val in his last fight." Dakota's eyes looked older now. "He got bad crippled. Mebbe he'll never throw a gun again. Well, you got some good deputies to back us in this?"

"I kin git 'em. Punchers. Jim Dayley's 2-Bar, the Spade Bit an' Sam Gannon's. All of 'em rarin' to go 'cause if we git back some of the loot that gang's took off banks an' pay wagons, there'll be some nice reward money. Them boys been wantin' to tear over into the Black Hills an' jump Spike there. But I'm dubious about that. There'd be some good men killed, an' I wouldn't have no backin' by the law. We may have to do that, though. I got me three dipities here in town. They work at Pete's Livery Stable. Well, it's all right, is it? You'll go through with this, Dakota?"

"Yes, but I don't like it. That fizzle at the bank looks fishy to me. You sure nobody but this Barenden was onto the fake of that holdup?"

"Dead sure. We talked it over 'fore I went to see you, an' I dropped in this mornin' to tell him you was comin'. We was careful that nobody was listenin'. Here." The sheriff drew a deputy's badge from his pocket. "Raise yore right hand. Do you solemnly swear an'-so-on-an'-so-forth?"

"Oh, all right." The youthful puncher tucked the badge and his knife into his pocket. "But if that Spike gang got onto this little trick—— Blooey! Well, drop me in that waddie's cell for a minute, and I'll see what he was up to."

CHAPTER II

And Why It Fizzled

SOMETIME in the past he may have had a real name, this boyish Dakota, but it had been lost in the shuffle of exciting years. He was a cowboy, but he was much better known as a paid gunman. He fought for wages in wars of the range, rode blithely out to get bad killers, filled in between at forty a month on some peaceful ranch. Sometimes, as now, he wore a deputy's star; just as often he fought on the other side.

Dakota was a successful gunman, light-

ning fast, cool and determined in action, but never a killer. His man always had his chance. He never had been known to make house-burning raids on nesters, or to kill sheep, or to ambush an enemy. His fighting was in the open. As a cowboy, he was a whistling, innocent, smiling boy. As a gunman, he was a dealer in sudden death.

This bright idea of Andy Clausen to establish Dakota as a bank robber had not appealed to the youthful gunman. Not that he had any particular scruples against playing the part; but he felt that in such a complicated scheme there were too many chances for a slip-up. And this entrance of the little white-headed man with his deadly automatic had proved Dakota right.

Sheriff Clausen led the way to the cell in which he had confined the stranger, and unlocked the door.

"I guess you two'll be safer together," he remarked for the little man's benefit. "Mebbe you'll git to argyin' over whose fault that fizzle was, an' the county'll save the expense of trials an' hangin's."

After Clausen had tramped away, Dakota studied his cell mate, who crouched like some animal upon the bunk. He was small and cat-like, with a face like that of a mummy. Although his hair was white and there was the dried-up suggestion of great age in his pinched features, Dakota decided that he was not older than thirty. His mouth was a thin-lipped slit below a sharp nose; his rat eyes were a greenish-gray and were always shifting; his brows and lashes were as white as his hair.

"Youse pulled dat like some skirt!" sneered this strange specimen. "Chee! Youse could 'a' croaked de hull bunch."

"Mebbeso," drawled Dakota. "But I didn't. Looks like you started in to do it for me. S'posin' we get a little acquainted. I'm called Dakota."

"T'hell wit' youse!" snarled White Head. "Y're jest a kid. But youse got guts," he added, squinting his rat eyes at the smiling puncher. "Dey call me Skeeter. I'm from Chi. When do we beat it outa dis dump?"

"I'm wondering myself. Now, Skeeter, how-come you horned in on my play?"

"Hully chee! Is dat de way youse feel? T'hell wit' youse!"

Dakota produced his knife and removed his white hat to select a match from several stuck in the blue ribbon band. With his eyes again upon the belligerent stranger, he began shaving delicate curls from the match.

"Don't get sore, lad," he said with his warming smile. "I'm beginning to think mebbe there's something to this that I didn't get. How-come you in this country, anyway?"

"I was wit' de Butch Walker gang in Chi." Skeeter seemed very eager to tell of great wrongs. "Got a dirty deal from Butch an' had to blow. I had two gran' in me kick, an' I hit for de West. 'I hear a card sharp kin make a killin' in any little burg out here. Dat was a bum steer, cull. I made it wit' de pasteboards, all right, but a geezer tapped me on de bean an' rolled me for me wad. Dat was in Cheyenne. I come up here den, lookin' for a crib to crack. Dis bank looked good, an' I was sizin' it when I seen youse pull dat loony stick-up."

"Uh-huh. And you thought you'd horn in and help me."

"Nix on dat horn-in stuff!" snapped Skeeter. "Youse ain't sech a simp youse don't know dey was layin' for y'. Chee! Dat guy I croaked had a cannon stuck t'rough de wall an' was ready to blow yer head off."

"So that was it," mused Dakota. "That cashier was in the room right back of the teller I had my gun on. Aiming to get me with a rifle through a hole in the wall. Say, did you see the big feller?"

"Naw. Dat gink was in back some'eres. He didn't show till dat bull grabbed me. Didn't youse know why I was t'rowin' de lead?"

"I didn't." Dakota felt a much warmer interest now in this tough rat of the underworld. "It looks like you saved my bacon. Huh! That makes things a lot different. A lad laying for me with a rifle!"

"I guess youse is all right, cull. Now we gotta blow, see? Dat's easy." From somewhere deep inside his trousers,

Skeeter produced a little automatic pistol. "If youse'll call dat bull, I'll bump him an' we'll beat it."

Dakota almost shuddered at the cold-blooded casualness of the little gangster. He shook his head as Skeeter sought to press the tiny weapon into his hand. "I couldn't use a thing like that. Funny the sheriff didn't take it offen you."

"He got one o' me gats." Skeeter grinned in a manner that distorted his wizened face. "But since I got t'rowed in once 'cause I lost me gat, I pack 'em all over me." Deftly he brought out the twin of the pistol. "An' I got more if I need 'em."

"Better we don't start anything just yet," remarked Dakota. "I'm guessing now that this may not be so serious. Seeing as the lad you killed was trying to get me, I reckon you done a good job." He caught the eye of Andy Clausen, who was wandering restlessly about the office. "Now, I shouldn't wonder if that sheriff takes me outa here. If he comes back, you lay low with your arsenal."

When Clausen shuffled to the cell door, the two pistols had disappeared and Skeeter was again hunched upon the bunk. "Think better I'll keep you two apart after all. Yuh might plot suthin'. C'mon, cowboy." The sheriff led Dakota out and to the rear. "Find out anything?" he asked eagerly.

"A hull lot. But the thing that'll interest you most is that your other prisoner is a Chicago gunman. He's got a dozen or so of them little pop-guns hid out in his clothes."

"The hell! Couldn't you git 'em away from him?"

"I didn't want to," drawled Dakota. "I want to see you squirm a little. Best thing you can do is to turn that lad loose. I'd tell him about it right earnest though 'fore I went to the door. 'Cause he was just suggestin' a kind of bloody way of gettin out."

"I can't turn him loose," mumbled Clausen. "Pete is wild about him killin' his cashier. I'm 'fraid we'll have to put him through an' rig up the scaffold."

"I don't think you will," said Dakota coolly. "I'll tell you why. There's a nigger in the woodpile, but I leave it to you to dig him out. The reason that cashier got killed was because he was laying for me with a rifle."

"Aw, no!" spluttered the sheriff. "Nelson couldn't 'a' knowed what we was up to. An' my deal with Pete was for him to see that the guns in the bank was unloaded."

"That rifle sure was loaded. Didn't you hear it wham?"

"I heerd it. But, doggone! I wonder could Nelson been mixed with that Spike gang? He mighta overheerd Pete an' me talkin'. It has seemed funny how Spike Sevreen never took a try at this bank. If Nelson was in on it they'd prob'ly be savin' this bank for a last big haul."

"I leave all that for you to worry over," said Dakota. "Where's my gun?"

"On my desk. Huh? Say, what yuh mean?"

"I mean that I'm on my way." Dakota yawned and stretched his arms. "This poor little cowboy don't run his head into no tricky traps like I see gawpin' all around here. I'm going back to Sheridan."

"Aw, see here, Dakota." Sheriff Clausen was quite maudlin in his pleading. "You wouldn't throw me down. An' after we got it all fixed. If this Nelson was tangled with Spike Sevreen, it won't make no difference. Spike won't know jest how he come to be killed. We'll put it all on this white-head."

"Do it any way you want to, Andy." Dakota led out to the office and secured his gun. "I tell you I'm through. You've tricked me into a hole, and I sure don't want that hole to be my grave. And this Skeeter. You turn him loose. Understand? Don't wait to talk it over with Pete Barenden, either."

"Aw, doggone!" groaned Clausen. "Here I am right where I was last week. With the hull county howlin' at me—an' Al Carpenter drivin' me wild. Say, Dakota, you stay here then an' help me rib up something."

"And take chances of there being another Spike man planted in your town?

Not me. I'm on my way. My horse out back?"

"Yes. Aw—hell! Nuthin' now but for me to git a army of punchers an' go raid Spike's hole-up. Aw, c'mon' Dakota," he pleaded. "You stay an'——"

Dakota turned his back upon the very sick sheriff and strolled out the rear door. In a moment he had mounted his white-footed bay pony and was riding down an alley, carefully keeping out of sight from the street.

Where the alley swung into a sandy wash that crossed the road at the outskirts of the town, Dakota paused behind a clump of oaks to peer up the street. Sighting no riders heading his way, he prepared to go on, but the rattle of wheels on the route he was taking caused him to hesitate, then to draw farther back from the road to wait for the incoming rig to pass.

A pair of ranch ponies came into view at a lively trot. Behind them bumped a buckboard carrying a man and a woman. The team plunged into the wash. Dakota, realizing that the horses were half wild and ready to stage a scene at the slightest excuse, started to withdraw still more. But the near horse sighted him, shied and started to kick.

The wiry old driver sawed on the reins and yelled. The horses quieted, but the near one had gone over the outside tug with both feet. Dakota promptly rode out to straighten the mix-up.

"Set still, old-timer," he called. "I'll fix it."

As he dismounted, he glanced at the couple in the buckboard. The driver was a typical cowman, bronzed of features and graying of hair and mustache. His companion was a sweet-faced, middle-aged woman, wearing a faded black dress and a little black bonnet.

"Much obliged, cowboy," said the man. "That helps a lot. Took me half a hour to straighten out one of them tangles. Dang broncs ain't been driv much lately an' they're frisky. You come from town? You know if Andy Clausen is home yet?"

"He got in to-day on the stage." Dakota unhooked the tug, skilfully ducked a flying hoof and pushed the horse over.

The woman leaned down to look at Dakota. "Did you hear anything about—about—— You see, our boy—our Mickey——"

"There, Annie," soothed the man. "This lad's a stranger. He wouldn't know. Yuh see, pard, our boy was kidnaped by that dang Spike Sevreen. We—we was wonderin' if Andy had heard anything."

"I heard something about that," said Dakota softly, looking with sad sympathy at the woman's emotion-drawn face. "They're holding the boy for a wad of money, I hear."

"Fifteen thousand. I been tryin' to raise it—seein' Andy can't do nuthin'. You see, Spike holds out over the state line and our sheriff claims he can't go get him."

"Oh, let's go see Pete Barenden," moaned the woman, "and get it over. I can't stand it—I can't—I can't!"

"Yeh, we'll do that." The rancher tightened his reins. "I'd 'a' made the deal with Pete before this, but Andy wouldn't stand for it. Well, so long, cowboy. Much ob——"

"Jest a minnit!" Dakota stepped to where he would not see the woman, crying softly into the crook of her arm. "I heard your name was Carpenter, didn't I? Well, they call me Dakota."

"Pleased tuh meetcha." Carpenter reached down a bony hand. "Yeh, I'm Al Carpenter. Annie, meet—er—Mister Dakota. Yuh lookin' for a job?"

"Not exactly. Still mebbe. I come in here to take a job, but it fizzled. Now, yuh was saying something about making a deal with that banker. Yuh mean he'll lend you the money to buy your kid back?"

"Not him!" snorted Carpenter. "He's got too much of my notes already. No, he's offered me the fifteen thousand for a deed to my ranch."

"Ranch worth more'n that?"

"Lots more, but I'm in a hole. The place is bad mor'gaged—we've had a couple of rotten years. And ranches are 'way down. It's a shame though. That's the best place in the country. Four sections deeded, an' lease on plenty of that

hill country." He waved his hand toward a rolling grass land.

"Uh-huh," mused Dakota. "Jest another case of a cold-blooded banker stomping a man when he's down. Now, about your boy——"

"Oh, he's only a child, mister," broke in Mrs. Carpenter. "'Way up there with them rough men, who drink and swear and—— Oh, I can't stand it!"

"They grabbed Mickey up over a week ago," explained Carpenter. "He was ridin' aroun' as usual. His pony come home with a note tied to the saddle. They —them devils threatened to send his ears in if I didn't come through with the fifteen thousand."

"Oh, Al, let's go—quick!" cried the frantic mother. "We'll sell the ranch. We've got to have our boy."

Dakota's narrowed eyes turned up toward the town. Through a fringe of leaves he could see a bulky figure crossing from Pete's Livery Stable to Andy Clausen's office. The boyish gunman looked back at the tearful face of the woman, on to Al Carpenter, again preparing to release the restless ponies.

"I guess mebbe you hadn't better go see that banker this morning," drawled Dakota. "I got a hunch your boy will show up."

"Oh! You mean you've heard something?" This in an eager cry from Mrs. Carpenter.

"Not that. But mebbe I can do something. Anyway I'm going to try." Dakota smiled and waved a turn-around gesture. "You folks go back home and set tight."

"Meanin' you aim to go into the Black Hills?" demanded Carpenter, his keen eyes searching Dakota's boyish features. "Jest what yuh mean?"

"I've heard they'd be a lot of reward money paid to whoever cleaned up that bunch," replied Dakota. "Mebbe I can bring back a little of their loot. But I'll get your boy out first," he added honestly.

"I'll go with you," said Carpenter. "I bet we can——"

Mrs. Carpenter sputtered a protest and Dakota shook his head.

"Nope. You folks go back home, and if you hear something bad about me—don't talk. Don't let on you ever seen me. So long." He shook hands with the brightening rancher and removed his hat to bow to the woman. "Good-by, ma'am. I'll try to have good news for you in a day or two."

Al Carpenter, anxious to catch at any straw, began eager promising of reward. This, together with the woman's hysterical efforts to express her gratitude, drove Dakota hastily to his horse. He waited until Carpenter had turned the buckboard and was driving away, then he headed back into the alley down which he had come from the rear of the jail.

"Now, what yuh think uh that?" he chuckled. "But I always did get fussed up when a woman starts to cry. And darned if I hadn't forgot all about that kid. Well, here goes for a nice bit of fun. I'll show Andy the kick-back to that funny bizness he got me into."

He drew up back of the jail and dismounted. After investigating the corral and selecting another horse, he paused in the act of dragging a saddle from a shed. "Mebbe not," he murmured. "That Skeeter lad didn't look like he could ride even a hobbyhawss."

Dakota returned to his little bay, untied the mouth of a canvas sack that reposed back of his cantle and drew out a belt with its holster and gun. With the deft movements of much practice, he buckled this belt over his other one with the holster hanging low on his left hip. Deliberately he unwound whang strings from the holsters and tied them round his legs.

Nonchalantly then he rolled a cigarette and lighted it, produced his knife and found a chip to whittle. With careless steps he strolled to the back of the jail and entered, moving more quietly as a mumble of talk came to him from the office.

"Aw, you're dreaming, Andy," boomed the voice of Barenden, the banker. "Ben Nelson has been with me for two years, and he was on the square. He wasn't laying for that gun-slinging kid. Only thing

I can figure is that he heard the talk in the front room and peeked enough to catch on. Thinking it was a real holdup, he got busy with the Winchester."

"But I thought you was goin' to unload all the guns," grumbled the sheriff. "That rifle shore was loaded."

"Ben must have had some shells handy," argued Barenden. "Now, Andy, this business looks fishy to me. I'd say that you'd been tricked yourself and that this was a real holdup, with this Dakota and the white-head working together. And if it hadn't been for Ben and his rifle, it would 'a' worked. That little runt was to lay back until you'd taken Dakota out. With everybody out in the street, the white-head could have cleaned——"

"You're crazy in the noodle!" snorted Clausen. "I know Dakota, an' I know he wouldn't go in for that. This Skeeter is a stranger to him."

"Well, he'll be a stranger to this green earth right soon. Ben had a lot of friends. And I'll see——"

"Mebbe this white-head has friends, too." Dakota stepped into the office and smiled pleasantly at the surprised men. "Easy there, Andy. Jest keep your hands quiet." He slipped out the sheriff's gun and tossed it upon the desk. "You got a gun, Mister Banker?"

"Damn' if I wasn't right!" snarled Barenden. "You see now, Clausen. Here's your sweet trick—showing his hand."

"Sorry, Andy," drawled Dakota. "I gotta do this. Too bad I have to lose my spotless rep, but that's what I get trying to be tricky. Come on, you two. Get that cell key out, Andy."

To the accompaniment of profane grunts from the banker and keen-eyed glares from Clausen, the two men preceded Dakota to Skeeter's cell.

"Never mind your gats, Skeeter," Dakota warned the slum rat, who stood crouched in a corner with his hand in his coat pocket. "I'm doing this all fine and regular. Open her up, Andy."

The sheriff unlocked the cell door. Barenden appeared to be quite pleased over this corroboration of his theory.

"This'll sure mean a new sheriff, Andy," he growled. "To let a couple of stick-ups put it over on you!"

"In you go." Dakota prodded the two men into the cell. "Rip up that blanket, Skeeter."

The little gangster finally had grasped what was coming off. With his crooked mouth twisted into a grimace of satisfaction, he helped Dakota to bind the two men with blanket strips and to gag them with handkerchiefs.

"There you are," said Dakota, and locked the cell door. "If you work together and have good luck, you oughta get loose in a hour or so. I'll throw the key inside, Andy."

Outside the rear door Dakota waved his companion toward his horse. "Get in the saddle and I'll ride behind. Soon as we hit a ranch I'll buy you a hawss and give you some riding lessons. Ever ride any?"

"Youse ain't talkin' to me, cull," sniffed Skeeter, and went over the corral gate like a cat. In a moment he was back, leading Andy Clausen's buckskin by the mane. "Naw, none o' them kinda saddles for me." He caught a bridle from a peg on the wall and slapped it over the buckskin's head. Then he went upon the bare back with an easy crawl. "Com'on, bo," he called. "I'll show youse how a ol' jock kin ride."

CHAPTER III

Deadwood Mick

A MILE out from Wardance on the Sheridan road, Dakota halted on a brush-screened rise and glanced back.

"No chase on," he decided, then grinned at his companion. "I gotta square myself, Skeeter. I wasn't aiming to insult you, but I didn't guess that you could straddle a cayuse. I take it all back. You sure can ride 'em free."

"For ten years I was a jock," sniffed Skeeter. "But I couldn't stick on one of dem saddles."

"That relieves me a lot," sighed Dakota. "I was thinking I'd have to get you to a railroad. But you can make it there yourself and hit the choo-choo for Chicago. Got any money?"

"Naw. Flat. Chee! Youse thinkin' of slippin' me?"

"I ain't sure jest what yuh mean," chuckled the puncher-gunman. "But I was aiming to stake you. Seeing as you saved my bacon, I owe you more'n that. And I owe you a lot, too, for letting me get you outa that jail."

"Youse ain't so batty, after all," muttered Skeeter. "Youse is up to suthin'. Can't youse put me next, kid? If it's crackin' dat lousy crib—slip me. Wit' a drill an' some soup, I kin go into dat safe like eatin' peanuts."

"Nope," said Dakota, frowning. "You're off on the wrong foot, Skeeter. I'm up to a little private business that wouldn't interest you, there being nothing but glory and a warm feeling in it. I guess you and me don't travel the same road. It jest happens that I ain't a bank robber. That stick-up business back there was a fake to give me a rep with a bad gang. That sheriff was in on it."

"Hully chee!" Skeeter's rat eyes glistened. "Y' mean youse is a bull, too—or a dick? An' dat youse wasn't tryin' t' glom dat kale?"

"Gosh, but you have a funny lingo! I guess I get you, though. Yes, I made a deal with that sheriff to help him round up a bad outfit. That's my business—now. But when you butted in—which I'm mighty thankful you did—that boogered me, and I quit. Now I'm on my own—mebbe. And I think that pulling you out of that jail, especially with the good witnesses I had, has made my rep plenty bad."

"Aw, chee!" sneered the little gangster, disgustedly. "I t'ought youse was out to glom de jack."

"Well, you want some money?" Dakota produced a wallet. "You're outa your territory, Skeeter. Better get back to Chicago with them gats you're packing. First thing you'd snag your neck in a rope. They's a bad prejudice in this country against packing guns in your pocket—and shooting 'em through a coat."

"I don't want your mazum. Gimme de low-down, bo. Where youse goin' an' whatcha tryin' t' pull?"

"I'm jest after a kid — a boy — that's been kidnaped," replied Dakota patiently. "This Spike Sevreen has grabbed the kid and wants his old dad to pay fifteen thousand for him."

"An' youse is goin' t' horn in on de pay-off! Can't youse give me a lay on dat?"

"You pore little devil," sighed Dakota. "I'm 'fraid I can't get it through your noodle. I jest want to get this kid and take him back to his mammy. There's not a cent in it. Only a good chance to absorb some lead, and with only a old mother and father saying thank you for pay."

"Chee! I getcha, bo. Yeh, I getcha." Skeeter pawed his cap down over his eyes, scratched his ear and squinted up at the dark pine ridges to the east. "Aw, hell! Youse is goofy in de haid, but youse is a all-right guy. Now, I don't give a damn for dis kid—see, or his mudder, or any-t'ing—but let me go wit' youse, bo."

"Huh?" Dakota broke the cigarette paper into which he was sifting tobacco "You're the one that's goofy."

"Shirtinly. Batty as hell. But I wanta go wit' youse, cull. I wanta see how youse croak a mug wit' dem big gats. I wanta see youse grin when I show youse how I kin bump 'em off."

Dakota squinted speculativley at the twisted features of the little gangster. Somehow he could not help liking the man. But would he stand the strain of a situation in which he could not use his gats? And could he be trusted to run straight? He certainly would be a great help in establishing friendly relations with Spike Sevreen. No bad gang could possibly fail to recognize this underworld rat as a blood brother.

"All right," decided Dakota. "We'll hit her together. But this isn't a war. We can't bump off an army of bad hombres in their own territory. We'll have to smooth 'em down till we can get that kid away. So keep your gats quiet."

"Youse is de boss." Skeeter hooked the toes of his battered low shoes back of the buckskin's fore legs. "Hit de grit, bo. I'm wit' youse."

Dakota left the road and cut a wide

half-circle across the rolling hills. Down to the left he sighted a thin streak of dust from which a buckboard was emerging and turning into a ranch gate. That was Al Carpenter returning to his ranch to await hopefully the fulfillment of Dakota's promise to rescue his boy. The ranch lay in a small green valley, plentifully shaded by oaks and rich with grass. A group of painted buildings were clustered in a grove.

"And he'd turn his ranch over to that banker to get his boy back," murmured Dakota. "Well, I guess mebbe a man would do that."

An hour of this roundabout riding brought the two fugitives into a rough wagon road on the opposite side of Wardance. To the east the bare foothills merged into heavily timbered mountains that thrust their inky blackness into the blue sky. This pine-clad region ahead, dark and gloomy and mysterious, was the romance-clothed Black Hills of South Dakota.

From a ridge Dakota looked back to scan the reddish slope up which they had ridden, and to follow it round to the road line beyond the drab buildings of Wardance. There was no sign of pursuit. Dakota was not sure that there would be an attempt to recapture Skeeter. Something about Andy Clausen's subdued manner during that scene in the jail had caused Dakota to wonder if the sheriff had not guessed his reason for staging that jail delivery.

Still, that banker might insist on the sheriff going after the killer of his cashier. It would be a sad joke on Clausen, thought Dakota, if he jumped to the conclusion that his puncher-gunman was following their original plan.

In the early afternoon the two adventurers, still following the rutty wagon track that had been the route of early miners crossing to Deadwood, entered the first strip of the pine timber that clothed the Black Hills. Little meadows, rank with wild timothy and colorful with flowers, began to appear. Cold springs bubbled from the hillsides and trickled through thickets of willows and aspens. Here and there cattle and horses were grazing.

"Is dey anybody lives in dis country?" asked Skeeter. "Ain't dey a burg anywhere?"

"Folks don't live here so thick," replied Dakota. "A few ranchers in these timothy meadows, but the mining is all over on the other side. Some big towns over there. I was borned in this state. Mebbe that's how-come I'm called Dakota."

The old wagon road topped a wooded spur and gave the travelers view of the vast mountain region ahead. Below the black horizon line the pine slopes dropped down to green meadows and silvery lakes. In a cuplike pocket on the left, Dakota sighted a number of log cabins.

"There's our Robin's Ranch," he said. "That usta be a right lively stopping place for the miners. Looks like there was quite a lot of stock in there. Russled, mebbe. Yeah, here's the guard what's going to ask fool questions. Now let me do the talking, pard."

A horseman was loping toward the road from a clump of trees. He appeared to be an ordinary line-riding puncher, but he wore a six-shooter and carried a rifle across his saddle. When the man rode nearer, he didn't look so much like a range rider. He was a lumpy-shouldered, swarthy-faced man, with hard black eyes under bushy brows.

"Howdy," the rider greeted Dakota, then his mouth dropped open as he looked on to Skeeter. "Y' startin' a circus?"

"He's jest a pilgrim," explained Dakota pleasantly. "Not near so awful as he looks. Yuh b'long to this ranch ahead?"

"Yeh. Guess you don't know this is private range. Road to Deadwood don't go through here no more."

"I didn't know that," returned Dakota. "But it don't make no matter. I've heard that Bones Skelton owns this Robin's Ranch now."

The other nodded, and again made frowning effort to determine if Skeeter really was a human.

"But you won't get much welcome there," he said. "Bones' forty-'leventh Chink cook quit him yestad'y, an' the ol'

man's madder'n he is busy—which is some. Got quite a bunch to cook for. Better you go on to Big Springs to-night. You can pick up the road right over in that draw."

"Oh, we'll make out with Bones," said Dakota cheerfully. "He's a old tillicum of mine—and Skeeter here is a first-rate cook. Going in? We'll ride along."

The man hesitated, scowled again at Skeeter, then shrugged and swung over to the side of the road so that his rifle pointed at the two trespassers. Shortly, however, Dakota's friendly talk caused him to relax. By the time the three reached the pole bridge below the ranch buildings, the man, who called himself Wind River Bill, had lost his frown; but he was still quite curious over Skeeter.

"He's the first waddie I ever seen ride into this country bareback. Seems like I've run onto that buckskin som'eres."

"Shouldn't wonder if you had," drawled Dakota. "We picked him up offen that Wardance sheriff this morning."

Wind River Bill threw a sharp glance at Dakota; then he grinned and nodded. "I see. Well, you'll find Bones in the big house," indicating a log building back in a grove of pines at the edge of a large meadow. "I gotta go see is my boss home."

The man swung to the left toward a number of small cabins, about which several men were moving. Dakota gave interested survey to Robin's Ranch. Signs were everywhere that the place had been badly neglected of late. Fences in the big meadow on the right were down and the rank timothy had been trampled and wasted by the stock. The long haysheds that dotted the meadow were empty. Quite a bunch of horses grazed in a pasture just below the ranch buildings.

"Easy now, Skeeter," Dakota warned his companion. "We're right in amongst a swarm of hornets. If we stir 'em up, you'll never see Chicago again."

The two men rode openly to the log ranch house and dismounted at the wide porch. Several dogs ran out barking. A man inside yelled at the dogs. Then from round the corner of the porch came the squeaky, high-pitched order:

"Lift 'em, yuh rannies! Stick 'em high—or I'll bore yuh."

Skeeter's hand darted to his coat pocket. Dakota whispered a sharp warning as he raised his hands to the level of his shoulders and peered across the porch floor. He could see only a big six-shooter and the brown hand that held it.

"Looks like you had us, pardner," he drawled. "We're plumb harmless, as you'll see if you'll come out and look us over."

"I'm sizin' yuh," came the shrill retort. "You lanky bozo seems to be all right—but what the dickens is that thing yuh got with you?"

"Friend of mine," chuckled Dakota, hearing behind him a loud guffaw from Wind River Bill passing on his way to the pasture. "I'm standing good for him. We're jest a couple of waddies looking for a night camp."

"Why didn't yuh say so?" sniffed the voice behind the big gun, and the speaker clambered upon the porch, jabbing his weapon into a holster that dangled below his knees. "I come putty near takin' a crack at that—that monkey."

Skeeter's explosion was part way between a surprised snort and an angry snarl. Dakota was smiling in friendly fashion at the laugh-provoking figure before him. It was a boy, red-faced and chunky of build, wearing a man's blue shirt and a pair of bear skin chaps with half their length staggered off. An empty cartridge belt hung diagonally from left hip to right knee, with the holster almost dragging on the porch floor.

"Dakota's my name," said the young puncher, having no trouble in recognizing the boy as the kidnaped Mickey Carpenter. "And my pal is Skeeter."

"I'm Deadwood Mick," returned the boy, and gravely shook hands with the two. "I'm gettin' me a gang together. Say," he lowered his voice and glanced furtively over his shoulder at the open door, "you know anything about fixin' guns? I hafta keep it dark so's I can bluff, but my six-gun is busted. The big spring, I guess."

"Let's see." With a man-to-man casual-

ness Dakota accepted the battered old relic and twitched the loose hammer with his thumb. "That's it, all right. Yeah, I can fix yuh out. Got the makin's of a spring in my warbag. Now, where's the boss? We want to get our supper order in."

"Hey Bones!" yelled the boy. "Here's a couple of waddies wantin' tuh eat."

A gaunt bean-pole of a man shuffled out upon the porch. He was thin of face and still thinner of form, and by some freak of nature was wholly without hip bones. Although the waist band of his overalls was tightly cinched, lack of anything in the way of supporting hips made the utter loss of his lower clothing a momentary expectation. The man hitched up the overalls which were about to slip off and peered through watery eyes at his prospective guests.

"Heluva time to come in on a man," he grumbled. "An' me without a thing in the way of a cook. Ain't I seen you som'eres, pardner?"

"You've got a bad memory, Bones." The smiling Dakota advanced with extended hand. "Or your eyesight's getting poor. You forgetting the time you and me covered half of Montany with a posse two jumps behind?"

"Dakoty! Danged if it ain't!" The lanky one forgot his slipping overalls as he pumped Dakota's hand. "We shore rid that time, didn't we? An' hadn't been for you that posse would 'a' snagged me to a limb. But what's up? Chased ag'in?"

"Mebbe. Meet my tillicum, Bones. His name's Skeeter—something-'r-other. But he's all right. Skeeter, this is Bones Skelton, the Hipless Wonder."

Skelton shook hands with the little gangster, but continued to eye him with a plaintive scowl. Mickey watched soberly.

"So yuh know him, do you, Bones?" said the boy. "Chased by a posse, huh? Why didn't yuh say so?"

"Aw, go long with you, Mick," chuckled Skelton. "Watcha think of my badman, Dakoty? Some gun-slinger, huh?"

"He looks like a real man tuh me. Well, if you'll show us a hole-up, Bones ——— All right to throw our hawsses in that corral?"

"Well, I'm a wall-eyed Chink!" Bones Skelton was staring with wide eyes at the buckskin Skeeter had ridden. "If there ain't Andy Clausen's Red Devil—an' without no saddle. Say, you lads musta been in a hurry."

"Something like that," admitted Dakota. "Anyway we got to where we jest had to grab that sheriff's hawss. Being as we're over the state line we're not worrying."

"Well, if you've had a tangle with the law you're right welcome here," said Skelton, brightening. "I reckon you've heard things about me, Dakoty. I got a bunch with me now. Tryin' to raise me a stake so I can stock this ranch an' have me a nice home place. Go herd these boys to that empty shack, will yuh, Mick?"

The boy guided Dakota and Skeeter to a log cabin up in the pines. The single room was fitted with a crude pole bunk and blankets, a fireplace and a couple of stools.

"How about fixin' my gun, cowboy?" suggested Mickey, when Skeeter had started toward the pasture with the horses. "I'm apt to need it 'most any time. I wanta be ready for Spike the next time he jumps me."

"Going gunnin' for Spike, huh?" Dakota carried his canvas bag into the cabin and rumaged in it. "That'll be Spike Sevreen, I suppose."

"That's the dirty skunk. But I'll git him! Then the boys'll make me boss of the gang."

"My gosh!" Dakota hurriedly burrowed his face in his warbag. "You are a ambitious little cuss, ain't yuh? I don't know if I better fix this gun or not. You been in here long, Mick?"

"Quite a spell." Then the boy blinked, and made a pathetic show of careless interest. "You come from Wardance, didn't yuh? Yuh know anybody around there?"

"You bet I know 'em," said Dakota, intent on pressing the new spring into the lock of the six-gun. "Saw your mammy and your dad jest this morning. They're kinda worried about you. But I told 'em you was all right. And that I'd take you down home to 'em."

"Oh—you will?" Mickey forgot his gun, forgot his ambitions to become a bandit leader, forgot to keep up his fight against his awful homesickness. "Gosh, mister, if you'll only get me outa here——"

"We'll jest do that, Mickey. To-night mebbe. They watch you pretty close, do they?"

"Aw, they watch me—there's one of 'em walkin' this way now. An' they lock me up at night. But they're all good pals—all but that dirty Spike. He lams me ev'ry chance. But I forgot. I was goin' tuh kill him so's tuh help Bones out."

"Yeah. What about Bones?"

"Yuh see, this gang has jest about ruined him. He had a dandy ranch here an' was doin' fine when they horned in on him. They jest camped in here on him an' drove a lot of russled stock into his hay fields. Fed up all his hay to their hosses last winter, and his cows died. I guess they've rode him till he's throwed in with 'em."

"That's bad," mused Dakota, who had hoped that Skelton might not be criminally connected with this gang. "Well, you keep a stiff upper lip, son, and keep mum. How many of this gang is there?"

"Let's see. Ten, I think."

"All here now?"

"All but Spike an' his two cronies, Heaves an' Monk. They went over to Big Springs to-day after liquor."

"There you are." Dakota tightened the last screw and tested the new spring in the six-gun. "Good as new. You haven't any shells, have you?"

The boy hesitated, scowling up at Dakota. Evidently he decided that he could trust this friendly puncher. "Yeh, I got five hid out. Snitched 'em outa Monk's belt the other night."

"You better not put 'em in the gun," advised Dakota. "And mebbe you hadn't better let anybody know that I fixed this. Now we'll go over and see Bones."

The man who had been walking about the yard to keep Mickey in sight, turned away when the two came out of the cabin. Several other men were watching Dakota curiously from the shade of a pine. The young puncher threw them a casual greeting and went on into the ranch house.

The large front room extended the full length of the building. An open stairs ran steeply upward between doors that opened into the kitchen and into a bedroom. The big room was furnished with a long oil-cloth-covered table and several long benches, everything filthy with cobwebs, soot and tracked-in dust, and plainly suffering from the general neglect. The walls appeared to have been papered periodically for years with newspapers and magazine pages, but had escaped recent renovation, for the paper was cracked and torn and hanging in strips. In a corner back of the table a blackened area suggested a close call from a disastrous fire; possibly some careless diner had tossed a lighted match against that tinder-dry paper.

Bones Skelton came in from the kitchen, yanking at his low-slipping overalls. "Some day I'm goin' tuh start killin' me some Chinks!" he growled. "Since this gang has been here feedin' 'em rotgut whiskey I ain't been able to keep one on the place. An' now I have to cook for this army myself."

"I wanted to ask you about this gang," said Dakota. "Spike Sevreen's outfit, ain't it?"

"Yeh, I guess they've made quite a rep over in Wyoming," grinned Skelton. "They're shore makin' good money, if you're lookin' to join up with 'em. I'm pullin' down a good rake-off for lettin' 'em use my ranch—an' boardin' 'em. If I jest had me a good cook——"

"Well, two more hadn't ought to bother you much," said Dakota, depressed by thus learning definitely that Skelton was a member of this outlaw band. "My pard and me want to rest up with you a few days. How about it?"

"That's all right. You may hafta cook though. Say, you reckon you're liable to be chased this time?"

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Dakota, and forced aside his reluctance to playing a treacherous rôle against an old saddle mate. "But I hear Andy Clausen don't get over on this side of the state line much. Still, he'd have lots of urging this

time. Yuh see, my funny pard and me jest raised the dickens. First, this Skeeter killed Ben Nelson, the cashier, and——"

"What?" Skelton almost jumped out of his overalls. "Killed Nelson! An' then you come up here! You're crazy!"

"But that wasn't all," went on Dakota, wondering why Skelton should get so excited over the killing of a bank cashier. "Andy caught this pard of mine and locked him up. But I got him out, tucked Andy and that big banker in a cell, and Skeeter grabbed the sheriff's hawss for the getaway."

"You've shore raised hell!" mumbled Skelton, his eyes rolling wildly. "An' to come in here! Say, you grab your hosses an' slope—right quick! I owe you a lot, Dakoty——"

A commotion outside interrupted the old man. Loud angry voices mingled with the high-pitched, snarling tones of Skeeter. Dakota ran to the porch, with Skelton at his heels.

"It's Spike!" groaned Skelton. "Say, Dakoty! You keep quiet about your trouble in Wardance. An' git out first chance."

CHAPTER IV

"I'm Still a Deputy"

DAKOTA looked curiously at three riders lined up in the yard with their hands in the air. Before the three, with his tiny pistol out-thrust, crouched Skeeter.

"Who de hell youse guys t'ink y' are?" snarled the little gangster. "Pull a razzberry on me, will ya? Open yer face ag'in, ya monkey, an' I'll pink y' in de mush."

"What's all this?" Dakota strolled down, still studying the three newcomers, whom he knew must be those who had gone after liquor. "They jumping you, Skeeter?"

"Dat monkey-face made a dirty crack," sneered Skeeter, indicating a squat, gorilla-shaped man on the right. "Den he t'ought he'd scare me wit' dat cannon. Youse guys git me now. I ain't easy, see? I kin bump de t'ree of youse 'fore youse could blink."

"Looks like there had been a mistake," said Dakota, addressing a wide-shouldered, black-whiskered man, whose right arm ended in a dagger-like spike. "You're Spike Sevreen, ain't yuh? I'm Dakota. I guess mebbe you've heard of me."

"An' I guess mebbe I don't give a damn who you are!" retorted the cripple. "If this pop-gun skunk belongs to you——"

"Dakoty's all right, Spike," interrupted Skelton hastily. "Him an' me fit together in that sheep war over in Tamas Valley. He's had a little trouble now. An' the lad you're argyin' with rode Andy Clausen's hoss in here—bareback."

Spike Sevreen continued to glower at Dakota as he dismounted. "I dunno what you wanta come tearin' in here for. This is a private place."

The gorilla man, whom the leader now addressed as Monk, here spoke in low tones to Spike, the subject of his talk betrayed by furtive glances at Dakota. The third member of the party, a raw-boned, sandy-haired man, now rolled from his horse and dropped gasping and coughing upon the ground.

"Gottum ag'in, Heaves?" mumbled Spike, apparently much mollified since his exchange with Monk. "You been lappin' up too much of that likker. Well, you Dakoty," he said quite pleasantly, "I've heerd about you, all right, a hull lot. An' Monk here seen you in action once. A grinnin' kid, they say, but purty rapid with yore smoke-rods. Want a job?"

"Depends," countered Dakota. "I'm open if it's good, and my pard Skeeter is in on it."

"Aw, he's in," sniffed the outlaw leader. "Mebbe we can use that pop-gun of his'n. An' it's good. I reckon you know what we're tryin' to do. An' we're doin' it. Sorta collectin' taxes over in Wyoming. I'll explain our commission divvy after supper."

The whole gang gathered in the big room for the evening meal. There were seven men in addition to the three with whom Skeeter had tangled. Those seven were a hard-bitten lot, possibly punchers who had gone bad, but to Dakota they looked quite tame beside Spike, Monk and the asthmatic Heaves.

Dakota saw in those three a real menace. They were gunmen, and bad. Heaves and Monk each wore two guns in positions for handy use. And Spike, although he had lost his right hand, had surely trained his left and that dagger affair on his right stump, to answer all his needs.

Mickey seemed to be quite a favorite with the outlaws. They joked with him, encouraged his bragging about becoming a bandit, told him weird yarns from their experiences. All but Spike Sevreen. The leader had only scowls and sneers for the boy, but Dakota surmised that his crabbed manner was habitual. He was the sort of man who would beat a horse for nickering a welcome, or kick a dog for licking his hand.

After supper a jug of whiskey appeared and the outlaws became talkative and happy. Apparently they had no suspicion of Dakota. Skelton's acquaintance with the young puncher at a time when he was throwing dust in a posse's eyes, together with Monk's testimony regarding some spectacular exploit, had caused the gang to accept this young gunman as one of their tribe.

A couple of the younger men took up with Skeeter and became eagerly interested in the little gangster's lurid tales of underworld bloodshed and crime. A poker game was started. Dakota was invited to sit in, but he preferred a round of crib with Bones Skelton. Mickey went to sleep on the floor. Skelton quit his game long enough to carry the boy upstairs. Dakota observed that when the old man came down he handed a key to Spike Sevreen.

The leader became too engrossed in the poker game, and too woozy from much drinking, to do anything toward initiating his two recruits. Five of the outlaws were still playing and guzzling from the jug when Dakota and Skeeter departed for their little cabin.

"You seemed to get in with them fine," said Dakota, somewhat worried over Skeeter's easy manner while hobnobbing with the outlaws. "I hope yuh ain't taking too earnest to that bunch."

"Aw, chee! Le's go in wit' dis gang. Dem guys is jes' swimmin' in gravy. Dey was tellin' me——"

"Lissen, pard." Dakota faced the little man across the candle he had lighted. "Let's understand this. You want to play with them, or with me?"

"Aw, wait a minnit—wait a minnit! I ain't goin' to t'row youse down, kid. I gi' you my word, didn't I? I never t'rowed a pal down yet. What's eatin' youse?"

"It's all right then," drawled Dakota. "Yuh're a hard bird tuh savvy. I just wanted you to get me. If you was tuh switch now, my name would be mud—'cause I never could throw a gun on a man who'd saved my skin. Now, that kid——"

"Nevy min' dat kid!" sneered Skeeter. "I ain't doin' nuttin' for him. But I'm stickin' wit youse, see? Youse say de word an' we go up right now an' clean dat gang."

"The argument's over," chuckled Dakota, only partly reassured. "Let's hit the hay."

Dakota had considerable thinking to do after he had gone to bed. Even Skeeter's snores and groans could not distract his mind from a rather puzzled study of this situation. He had rather expected to find his old saddle mate Skelton mixed in with this gang's activities, so he had not been greatly surprised at that.

But he had been surprised, almost bewildered, by Skelton's excited reaction upon learning of the bank-robbing trouble in Wardance. Why had the old man shown such consternation over an attempted robbery and the killing of a cashier? It was too soon for Skelton and the others to have learned of the fake of that affair, even if such information had leaked out.

"Huh!" mused Dakota sleepily. "That's funny. Bones acted like this Spike gang would just about eat us up if they found out about that. But shoot! This is going to be easy. I can pack that kid outa here whenever I'm ready. But I ain't quite ready, 'cause I forgot to give Andy back that deputy's star."

Sometime in the night Dakota was awakened by a horse pounding across the yard. A man's voice bellowed Spike Sevreen's name. Half-awake men growled back. Dakota rose hastily without rousing Skeeter and slipped outside. He was in time to see several forms crossing the yard toward the ranch house.

"I'll git it right now," came the snarling tones of Spike Sevreen. "An' you can take it down. You oughta be at the ranch 'fore daylight."

As he started across the yard Dakota heard the party make noisy entrance into the ranch house. Rounding a big pine the puncher kicked into something that was much too soft to be a rock.

Instinctively he caught his balance and hurled himself upon this stumbling block. But before he could get a grip on the man sprawled on the ground, Dakota snorted his disgusted relief. A wiff of the sleeper's breath convinced him that there would be no outcry from this outlaw, who was dead to the world from imbibing too freely of Big Springs whiskey.

A light flared up inside the house as Dakota approached; then he heard footsteps thumping up the stairs. Mickey's sleepy mumble answered a racket above. Dakota stepped lightly upon the porch and edged to the side of the open door.

"Git down there, y' little devil!" growled Spike, and shoved Mickey into the room. "Y're goin' t' write a little letter to your dad."

Bones Skelton came in yanking at his slipping overalls. The new arrival, a slender, pock-marked half-breed, sat upon a corner of the long table. The ape-like Monk and the asthmatic Heaves were the others present.

"Quit that snivlin'!" Spike produced a crumpled sheet of dirty paper and a pencil. "You kin write, can't you?"

Mickey nodded. Dakota could see that the boy was badly frightened, and was shrinking from the outlaw. Evidently the two had had sessions before.

"Write this: 'They're goin' to cut my ears off if you don't bring the fifteen thousand up here before to-night.' An' sign it. Git back to bed now. An' say—— What did them two strange waddies say to you?"

"Nuthin' much. That Dakota—he's all right. They're on the dodge, I guess."

Dakota peered into the room, considering. That note shouldn't go to Al Carpenter. It would drive those parents wild. For an instant Dakota was of a notion to attempt a clean-up right there, then he had an idea that drew him chuckling from the porch, to run back to the cabin where Skeeter was sleeping noisily.

"Come alive!" He emphasized his hoarse whisper by impatient shaking. "I got a little job for you. Quick now!"

He had Skeeter outside and was revealing his plan before the little gangster was fully awake. "Use this." He thrust one of his guns into Skeeter's hand. "Your little pill-shooter would be a give-away. And don't get caught. Soon as you spring the joke, run back to bed. I'll be there soon as you are."

Spluttering protests against what he considered a waste of energy and ammunition, Skeeter groped through the gloom toward the rear of the house. Dakota returned to his position beside the front door and peeked inside. Mickey had disappeared. Spike, with the note in his hand, was fairly howling with angry surprise over a bit of news he had just received from the half-breed messenger.

"Tried to rob the bank!" he bawled. "Killed the cashier—an' locked up Andy an' Pete Barenden? It was them two all right. They ain't another sech a looker in this country as that little runt. If they didn't have a crust t' come up here!"

"Pete thought first they headed back to Sheridan," said the half-breed, "but us three rode twenty miles down that way. Andy's raisin' hell about his hoss. I bet Pete'll be glad to know where them two is at."

"He don't need to bother!" raged Spike. "I'll fix them two. Killed Ben——"

A shot boomed from the rear, then another. The men inside ducked instinctively. Spike, in the act of passing the note to the messenger, dropped the note to reach for his gun. The gasping Heaves slapped his hat upon the lamp, bringing black darkness to the room. Another shot

whanged from down toward the meadow.

"Ketch 'im!" yelled Spike. "Whoever he is."

The men swarmed out through the kitchen as a final pair of shots crashed from still farther below the house. Dakota was inside the dark front room before the outlaws were all outside the back door. Too impatient for a groping search, he scratched a match and found the note that Mickey had written. Having no time to hunt for the pencil, Dakota fingered a cartridge from his belt and with the lead bullet hastily scrawled a few words on the back of the note. He then folded the paper with his writing inside, tossed the note on the table and hastened back to his cabin.

About to enter the cabin, however, he had a thought that drew him back to the drunken sleeper under the pine. Chuckling, he rolled the man over, secured his gun and hid it under a rock. A moment later he was feeling his way into the cabin. Skeeter, breathing hard, was already in bed.

"Give me that gun," said Dakota. "I've got to clean it."

He pawed a rag from his warbag, wiped out the gun barrel, reloaded the cylinder and thrust the weapon into its holster. After readjusting the belts to their handy position over the pole head of the bunk, he crawled under the blankets.

"What was youse tryin' to pull?" muttered Skeeter. "I t'ought youse was goin' to bump dat Spike."

"Nothing like that," chuckled Dakota. "Quiet now. I hear 'em going back to the house."

Evidently the mysterious shooting had not been disquieting enough to draw Spike from his purpose to send that note to Al Carpenter. A few minutes later Dakota heard the messenger ride away. Then footsteps approached across the yard.

"Hey, you waddies!" called Spike. "You in there?"

"Huh?" mumbled Dakota. "What yuh want?"

"Didn't you fellers hear that shootin'?" demanded the outlaw, thrusting a lighted lantern inside the door.

"I did hear something," yawned Dakota, sitting up and rolling a cigarette. "Thought I was dreaming. What was it?"

"I dunno." Spike stepped into the room and peered suspiciously at the loud-breathing Skeeter. "Sure you wasn't walkin' in your sleep?"

"I mighta been," drawled Dakota. "I dang near killed a man once that-away." He drew one of his guns from its holster and examined it. "Nope, not me this time. My guns are loaded."

The bandit leader stroked his chin with his stump of wrist from which the spike had been unstrapped. He eyed the guns for a moment, then shrugged. "It must 'a' been one of my men sleep-walkin'. Say, what was that trouble you two had down in Wardance?"

"Nothing to worry over," sniffed Dakota, and pinched out his cigarette. "A man got killed, but that was a mistake."

"Huh!" Spike bristled like an angry cat, but at a warning word from Monk behind him, he backed out and tramped away.

Dakota barricaded the door with stools, then spent some time in puzzled speculation. Spike Sevreen had shown nothing of comradely satisfaction over learning that Dakota had attempted a bank robbery in which a cashier had been killed. On the contrary, he had betrayed a very angry resentment against the two who had pulled that fizzle. Dakota was trying to find some reason for such a surprising state of affairs when he dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER V

"We're Goin' to Turn You in"

THE sun was shining when Dakota awoke again. He arose from beside the snoring Skeeter and went outside. It was a beautiful morning. Birds were singing in the pines. An old milch cow was mooing below the ranch buildings. A doe and her two fawns were feeding down in the meadow. Observing the smoke of Skelton's breakfast fire, Dakota strolled round to the rear and entered the kitchen.

Bones Skelton was hanging over a battered cook stove, dividing his attention between frying bacon and slipping overalls. He looked up at the young puncher, his thin features ludicrous with dismay.

"You didn't go!" he spluttered. "Why the devil didn't you git out?"

"Didn't feel able," returned Dakota. "Had to get a good night of sleep. Slept pretty good, too, but I dreamed a lot of shooting stuff."

"I guess mebbe you didn't dream that. Yuh mean you didn't have nuthin' tuh do with that shootin'?"

"Gosh! Was there a fight? Yeah, that poker bunch was getting bad lit up when we left."

Skelton squinted at the puncher, turned to the table for flapjack batter, swung back to Dakota.

"Now, see here, pard," he said defiantly. "I'm tryin' to get you outa this mess. I can't forget the good turn you done me—herdin' me bad wounded away from that posse. But you've gone an' boogered yourself—pullin' that stuff in Wardance—an' then comin' right in here. You git outa here right now—'fore Spike comes in. If you don't I—I'm 'fraid I can't do a thing for you."

"You seem bad stirred up over something," drawled Dakota, "but I can't savvy what's eating you. I know this gang you run with is bad, but they sure can see that Skeeter and me are some streaked ourselves. Soon as they find out how we tore loose in that Wardance town they'll jest take to us like brothers."

"The hell they will! I thought you had sense, Dakoty. Spike knows about that now, an' he—he's out to git you. He—look out! Here he comes now."

Dakota was prepared for trouble when he walked out upon the porch to meet Spike Sevreen and the coughing Heaves. But the outlaw appeared to be in a conciliatory mood, and was almost apologetic.

"I found out about that shootin'," he said, grinning. "Blacky Bloom sneaked off last night with a gallon jug. He's out here now, dead to the world, and his gun is gone."

"I'm glad you got that figgered," said Dakota, not at all fooled by Spike's show of friendliness. "I'd hate tuh think I done that in my sleep."

Others of the gang straggled in until all were present except the Blacky sleeper down by the big pine. Skeeter came slinking in through the kitchen. The party sat down to breakfast. Evidently it was the custom to let Mickey sleep late, for nobody made a move to get him down.

Throughout the meal Dakota observed the three leaders watching him. Once he caught an exchange of glances that ended in grins as if those three had a joke in common.

Although Spike and his two pals went to considerable pains to be nice to Dakota and Skeeter, the puncher-gunman, remembering Spike's wild reaction to the messenger's news, could not fail to understand the purpose of those soothing tactics.

But why should the killing of that cashier and the discomfiting of Sheriff Clausen so rile this gang? Were they jealous because strangers had butted into their territory and attempted to rob the richest bank in the county?

As the party rose from the table, the ever watchful Dakota saw it coming. The outlaws were maneuvering to corner Skeeter and himself. The bony Heaves, choking and sputtering, edged round toward the kitchen, while Monk took a slouching position at the front door. Spike Sevreen finished rolling a cigarette with nimble thumb and fingers, and grinned at Dakota as he moistened the paper with his tongue.

"Bein' as we allus treat pilgrims right," he began, "feedin' 'em an' sech, I waited till after breakfast to spring the bad news on you two. Now you lads comin' in here has got us in a hole."

"Yeah?" drawled Dakota, flicking his eyes to Skeeter, whose hand had instantly sought his coat pocket. "How yuh make that out?"

"I heered las' night about the crazy stunt you two pulled in Wardance," sneered Spike. "Now, Andy Clausen an' me ain't what you'd call right good friends, but we've treated him white by lettin' his Wardance town alone—an' he don't chase

us none. So in some cases we sorta work together. This is one of 'em. We've got to turn you lads in for killin' that bank cashier."

"Is that right?" purred Dakota.

"Gotta do it. Andy could make it hot for us if he got riled enough to come in here. It looks like this is a good chance to smooth him down a little."

"Looks more to me like you was sore 'cause a couple of outsiders horned in on your territory," said Dakota. "Now that's no way to treat us. We gotta make a living some way, and we sure didn't make a sody cracker outa that job."

"Can't help that," mumbled Spike, and batted his eyes from Monk to Heaves. "You ready to ride peaceable?"

Dakota considered that. Neither Clausen nor Barenden could so soon have made a demand on the outlaws for the two wanted men. Spike Sevreen was doing this on his own hook, a rather surprising action for a bandit to take against men who were supposed to be on the dodge.

But did Spike really intend to turn them over to the law? Dakota thought not, and therefore he saw no opportunity to get a part of the gang across the line by allowing them to take him. For some reason this bandit leader wanted badly to get rid of the two outsiders. If he turned anything over to Sheriff Clausen it would be dead bodies.

"I'm beginning to smell something," said Dakota, and moved back to the wall beside Skeeter. "Your proposition don't lissen reasonable. What-say, pard, do we let 'em run us?"

"Chee!" The little gangster screwed his face into a hideous scowl. "Dis bunch can't run us anywhere, cull. Youse watch dem in front. Me gat is achin' t' spit."

"You said it!" chuckled Dakota, and turned lash-veiled, smiling eyes upon Spike Sevreen. "If you think you can turn us over to that sheriff—go ahead. But remember my rep. When my guns come out I'm always shootin'."

Spike glanced uneasily at his men. Several of them acted as if they wished they were out of that room. Monk, guarding the front door, was on the side covered by Dakota, and that fact did not please the ape man at all. Plainly Monk was viewing a memory picture of this young gunman in action.

"Come on," invited Dakota, and tapped the ash from his cigarette. "They's—let's see—nine of you. Ten, counting Bones here. Seems like you oughta do 'most anything with us two. But, boy!" he exclaimed. "What a mess you'll make of this room if you try it!"

Apparently Spike and his followers saw now that to capture these two and take them down to the state line was not the simple job it had appeared to be. Should they start shooting they would probably get their men, but as Dakota had pointed out, there surely would be a mess. Most of them were familiar with Dakota's gunman reputation; also, they seemed to have a horror of that little automatic in Skeeter's pocket.

"We'll let you drift then," said Spike, winking at Heaves. "We don't want no trouble with you. Jest git out an' we'll send a word to Clausen that you hit for the bad lands."

"I don't see why we should go," argued Dakota. "From what I hear you don't own this ranch. We got money to pay Bones for our board. If you don't like our company, s'posing you fellers do the drifting."

Spike swore under his breath, then subsided to study the various positions of his men. He must have decided at once that to precipitate a fight would bring disaster. Several of the men behind him had edged to windows. At the first shot they would leave that room. While they might be in a position outside to do some gun work, they probably would be much too late to save their leader.

"Le's git 'em, Dakoty!" whispered Skeeter. "I kin bump dese two—den t'row de lead into dem behind. Youse git dat——"

"Easy," cautioned Dakota. "Now, Spike, I don't get the savvy of the way you're acting, but you can't drive us out. We're here to stay a spell and rest up. Got some planning to do, too. I had a notion you'd be right tickled to go in with

us on a job we was doping out. But yuh don't seem tuh like our style. We like you fellers fine," he grinned, "and we'd like to camp here peaceable with you."

Spike pawed at his black beard while he glowered at Dakota and Skeeter. Then he jerked his head to indicate retreat. "I tol' you we wasn't wantin' trouble — an' we ain't. C'mon, boys. Let 'em alone—for now."

"Better you make that permanent," cautioned Dakota. "We're going to sort of watch you from now on. Mebbe one of us will lay around with a rifle if the other goes outside. Anytime you feel like starting though——" He shrugged and stepped to the window to watch the men filing across the porch.

After the outlaws had gone into conference in the yard Dakota returned to where Skeeter was menacing Skelton with the out-thrust corner of his coat.

"What'll I do wit' dis skinny guy?" he demanded.

"Let me talk to him. Now, Bones, what yuh want tuh do? Go herd with your gang, or stick in here with us?"

"Aw, I gotta cook," muttered the old man plaintively. "But what you up to anyway? You're crazy! They can lay out there with rifles——"

"Mebbe not. That might kill their cook —and Mickey. Where is the kid?"

"Locked in that room upstairs."

"Well, well!" chuckled Dakota. "He oughta be pretty good life insurance for us—fifteen thousand worth anyway. Hey, Spike!" he called from the door. "Yuh 'member that we got your kid, don't yuh?"

Evidently Mickey had been the subject of that talk in the yard, for Spike now made a panicky effort to renew friendly relations.

"I wouldn't get excited," interrupted Dakota pleasantly. "If you're real good we won't go cash in on that kid ourselves."

Spike and his two cronies sat down under a tree for further discussion. Dakota went back inside. Skelton, mumbling to himself, had begun to clear the breakfast table. Learning that Spike had the key to Mickey's room, Dakota released the boy by simply kicking the door in.

"Better come down to breakfast, son," suggested the puncher. "I'm thinking we'll be getting you outa here pretty soon."

"Wait till I get my gun." Mickey pawed his ancient weapon from under his coat pillow. "I got her loaded now. An' I come putty near pluggin' Spike last night. They—they made me write a-nawful letter to my pop."

"I know, but don't you worry none about that. I'm thinking your dad will be right tickled when he reads that letter."

Dakota helped Skelton wash dishes while Mickey was eating; later he got the boy out of hearing of the old man.

"Now, we're trying to dope out something, Mickey. And I need you to help put over a little scheme to get that gang down across the line. You s'pose you could let them pump you as to what Skeeter and me aims to do?"

"You bet!"

"All right, but we can't do this too fast. All you need to tell 'em at noon is that you heard us talking about crackin' a crib. Can you remember that?"

"Yeh, but what does that mean?"

"Better you don't know jest yet," grinned Dakota, and drew Skeeter aside for a long conference.

The forenoon dragged away. Through the windows Dakota could see the bandits moving about. Two of them saddled horses and rode down the meadow carrying cane fishing poles. Another climbed the timbered ridge with a rifle under his arm. A poker game started up on a blanket. Dakota wondered why the outlaws did not appear more disturbed over losing possession of Mickey, and over being cut off from their commissary.

When Skelton's dinner bell sounded the outlaws quit their game and milled about, looking anxiously up at the house. Then Spike came from the cabin he occupied with Heaves and Monk, and clumped up to the porch.

"Hey, in there!" he called; and when Dakota appeared in the door: "How about calling our war off? We gotta eat."

"Sure, you eat," returned Dakota pleasantly. "Leave your guns down under that tree and come one at a time."

Spike and his men protested, then argued among themselves, but with Dakota standing firmly behind his ultimatum, they finally submitted to relinquishing their weapons. Covered by Skeeter standing at a window, Dakota searched each man as he came upon the porch. He found no held-out guns, but he removed a fearsome knife from Heaves' boot.

"Go ahead and eat, boys," invited Dakota. "I'm lookout at this game, and I'm sure good."

He placed a stool upon a bench in the corner and climbed to his seat. Sitting there at ease, shaving thin curls from a pine stick, he laughed and talked and bantered while the bandits ate.

Mickey, who was quite a favorite of the ape-hideous Monk, wedged himself in between that outlaw and Spike Sevreen. And all during the meal Dakota was chuckling to himself over the efforts of Monk to get information out of the boy.

The plan that Dakota had devised looked good—in theory. This gang, learning that two outsiders were planning to rob the Red River Bank, should, by all that was reasonable, try to beat them to it. And Andy Clausen, warned by that cartridge-written postscript on Mickey's note to his father, would be waiting with his posse. However, Dakota was getting a suspicion that made him less optimistic of the success of that trick.

The men had finished eating and were rolling cigarettes when Bones Skelton came hurriedly in from the kitchen.

"A bunch ridin' up the meadow," he said, looking dobutfully from Dakota to Spike Sevreen. "Looks like——"

"Set still—everybody!" warned Dakota. "Back off, Skeeter and help me watch 'em. If this is some of Spike's friends you may get action with that pocket-shootin' gat."

Dakota observed that the outlaws had brightened, and reasoned that they had been hopefully expecting this arrival. He edged to the door and looked down the meadow. Five horsemen were loping across the bridge just below the ranch house. Dakota's first glance caused him to draw a deep breath. The man in the lead was Sheriff Clausen, and just behind him rode Pete Barenden, the banker.

CHAPTER VI

The Sheriff Strings Along

DAKOTA frowned as he watched the five men ride up. This surely was a nervy stunt on the part of Sheriff Clausen, to come up here with such a small posse. The very fact that he had come told Dakota that Clausen could not have received the message contained in Mickey's note to Al Carpenter.

Of course Andy Clausen was not after these outlaws. Now that Dakota had had time to think it over, he realized that the foxy old sheriff must have seen through that jail delivery trick, and was depending upon Dakota to go through with the original plan.

Just a little worried, however, Clausen probably had sought corroboration by allowing Barenden to induce him to go after the killer of the cashier.

Well, the sheriff had arrived right on the dot, was Dakota's first reaction. With the outlaw gang in here unarmed, it would be no job at all for Clausen and his posse to herd them down across the line to where he could formally make the arrest. Then Dakota recalled the relief of the outlaws over the coming of this party, and he lost a lot of his confidence. His recognition of one of the three men behind the banker added still more to his uneasiness. It was the half-breed messenger of the night before.

The three men riding with Clausen and the banker were gunmen, hard-eyed and watchful. Dakota saw Barenden look back at those three men as the party swung in to the porch.

" 'Lo, Andy," greeted Dakota, stepping outside. "What's the good word?"

"Huh?" Clausen threw a quick glance at the men behind him, then tried to peer past Dakota into the room. "Where's that little pocket-shooter?"

"Right here," replied Dakota. "Want tuh see him?"

"You bet we want to see him!" snapped the banker. "And you too. Step on out here now, and keep your hands up."

"Come tuh get us, didya?" Dakota's smile swept from Andy Clausen to the banker. "I sure admire your nerve. Had dinner? Better come in and eat."

"Anybody else in there?" asked the sheriff uneasily.

"Jest some friends of mine. Come on in."

Ignoring the gun that Barenden had leveled at his stomach, Dakota backed through the door. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Skeeter standing at the farther end of the table, the side of his coat thrust forward by his hand in the pocket. By the time the sheriff and Barenden reached the door Dakota was at the little gangster's side.

"Easy, Spike," warned Dakota in low tones. "I don't know jest what this means, but I'm getting a hunch. Better you boys keep right cool."

Andy Clausen squinted at the outlaws seated round the table, looked on to Dakota and Skeeter, and hitched at his belt. "Seems like quite a family party," he drawled. "Now, about eatin'——"

"No time to eat," put in Barenden impatiently. "We come after these killers. You fellers," he said to the outlaws, "hadn't better mix in this. You keep quiet now and we'll take these two and go."

This situation was puzzling to Dakota. Of course the half-breed messenger had told Clausen and the banker of the whereabouts of the two wanted men. On the face of it, this was a posse come to take Skeeter and himself, but considering Sheriff Clausen's reluctance to going outside his jurisdiction, that theory did not seem wholly reasonable. Dakota wondered if Clausen knew that one of his deputies was friendly with Spike Sevreen.

"So yuh're after us, are yuh, Andy?" drawled Dakota. "It don't look like yuh waited to see if your friends here would turn us in."

"Huh?" The sheriff peered sharply at Dakota's smiling face. "Uh-huh. They wouldn't do it, heh?"

"We wouldn't let 'em. Now, Andy, I'm afraid you're getting in pretty deep. You ain't fooling me a bit. When you come riding in here with only four men I know right where you line up. I was wondering before about some things. Now I know. Do you take orders from Spike here, or him from you?"

Spike Sevreen growled something. Monk and Heaves exchanged glances. Clausen said nothing, but his old eyes were busy. Barenden withdrew his gaze from a searching survey of the outlaws at the table.

"Put your bracelets on 'em, Andy," said the banker, but his manner was less confident now.

"This is kind of a joke," chuckled Dakota. "Why, you can't take anybody out of here, Andy. These are friends of mine." He waved his hand to indicate the outlaw party. "There's something like a dozen of us here—with Bones Skelton back here in the kitchen with a rifle. Think you can buck us all, Andy?"

"I thought mebbe you'd go peaceful, Dakota," said the sheriff. "I'll see you fellers get a fair trial."

"You're not talking to me!" retorted the young gunman. "I'm staying here. So's my pard. Got anything to say against that?"

Clausen hadn't, and Barenden seemed to have lost all of his blustery arrogance. In fact, the banker now showed signs of a panicky nervousness. Again Dakota saw him scanning the faces of the outlaws.

"Hey, Andy!" piped up Mickey from beyond the table. "You goin' to take me home with you?"

Dakota awaited anxiously an answer to that. Upon the sheriff's reply depended the verification of his surprising suspicion. Clausen must have guessed by now that this outlaw band was unarmed and could not prevent him from rescuing Mickey. But the sheriff was hesitating.

"Can't do it this time, Mick," he said at last. "Be up ag'in in a day or two."

"Aw, you can take this hull gang easy!" cried the boy. "They can't——"

"We'll get you!" burst out Barenden, glaring at Dakota and Skeeter. "Don't think you can get away with a killing like that. You fellers!" He was speaking straight at Spike Sevreen. "I'm offering a thousand apiece for these two—dead or alive. Come on, Andy."

Barenden swung his back to the room and tramped out. Clausen looked sharply at Dakota and followed him. The three gunmen grinned impartially at Dakota and the outlaws and backed out to their horses. In a moment the five were riding away.

"Well, I'll be tea-kittled!" mumbled Bones Skelton. "I allus said Andy Clausen had guts, but this beats——"

"He didn't need sech a much," sniffed Dakota, watching Spike Sevreen's eyes. "This didn't take nerve a-tall. 'Cause Andy is working close in with you fellers, that's why."

"Took you some time to figger that, didn't it?" sneered Spike. "Y' see now. Why, we couldn't give you even a grin after you went an' pulled suthin' on Andy."

"How about them three hombres with Andy and that banker?" queried Dakota. "Deputies, are they?"

"Shore," replied the outlaw quickly. "But they got a savvy for how their bread's buttered. Now say—they's no need for us to have a war. Let's get together."

"Suits me," agreed Dakota, who now saw better chances for success through re-establishing friendly relations. "We didn't start this argument."

"Then let's call it off," proposed Spike. "I don't like the idee of settin' aroun' without airy guns—when that little pocket-shooter is jest rarin' to start."

"All right," nodded Dakota. "We go on from here. But don't let any of your men get ambitious, Spike—to collect the reward that banker offered. You're not going to turn even a couple of dead bodies over to him or to Clausen. Remember that, will yuh?"

Spike said he would, and he appeared quite earnest in his promises. He knew enough of Dakota's past exploits to be sure that this boyish gunman would be a hard one to catch napping. At the first sign of treachery Dakota's ready guns would end the career of a certain one-handed outlaw.

"If you fellers are all through eating you might give me a chance," suggested Dakota; then he chuckled. "It looks like Andy got so worked up he forgot all about his Red Devil hawss. Mebbe he's saving him for an excuse to come up again."

"What kinda game youse t'ink dis is?" snorted Skeeter, after the men had filed out. "Dat bull friend of yours is a punk. He could 'a' glomed this hull gang easy. Is dat right about him bein' in wit' dese guys?"

"Don't see the joke, do you?" grinned Dakota. "Well, I'm onto it now with both feet, so that little trick of getting these birds to beat us to that bank robbing is out. I see now why Spike was so worked up over us taking a crack at that bank."

Apparently Dakota paid little attention to the outlaws during the afternoon. He walked down to look at White Foot, his horse, strolled on down to a little lake in the meadow. He was watchful, however; it would have taken quick and accurate shooting to have dropped him before he could have dodged into the cover of brush or timber.

Skeeter slept most of the afternoon. Mickey seemed never to tire of studying the magazine and newspaper pages that were pasted on the walls. Bones Skelton baked a batch of bread, then started frying the trout that two of the outlaws had brought in.

Old Skelton was in a vicious humor. Burned by popping grease, he hurled a skillet of fish through the door. A venturesome dog went howling across the yard with a stove lid rolling at his heels. The slipping overalls received their share of the old man's wrath; mingled with his impatient curses were threats to "git me some of them dad-blamed galluses." Dakota decided that the time was not ripe to make an attempt to enlist Skelton's aid.

The outlaws came in to supper, all of them packing their guns; but it was evident that Spike had cautioned his men against the slightest of suspicious moves. Dakota and Skeeter ate with the outlaws, all talking in the casual manner of rangeland acquaintances. Spike and Heaves discussed a short-cut to Deadwood. Skeeter yarned of the days when he rode the thoroughbreds.

Monk neglected his eating in his attemp to get news out of Mickey. Because Dakota had abandoned the plan in which he was using the boy as a gossip distributer, Mickey was unable to add any further details to that crib cracking scheme. Monk glowered his disappointment.

Spike Sevreen, however, seemed suddenly to find a bright idea in the little they had pumped from the boy. After supper the outlaw leader lingered behind the others, and called Skeeter into a corner.

Dakota, watching from the kitchen, found much of uneasiness in the eager manner of the little gangster, who appeared to be falling enthusiastically in with some suggestion of the outlaw. And when the conference broke up, Skeeter's secretive side-stepping was still more disquieting.

"Aw, don't youse git fussy, bo," he muttered in reply to Dakota's careless question. "I was fillin' 'im wit' bull, see?" Then he grinned with a fearsome contortion of his wizened features. "I betcha I could git dem guys down where dat bull could glom 'em."

"Well, I'm not waiting any longer to get this kid out," said Dakota, troubled by Skeeter's reluctance to revealing the subject of his talk with Spike. "I'm going to get him on a horse and start him for home. He ought to be able to make it down alone."

Under cover of darkness Dakota proceeded to do a bit of Indian work among the horses in the pasture. Shortly he had Andy Clausen's Red Devil up in the woodshed, equipped with a saddle borrowed from Skelton's stable.

"Yuh think you can make it alone in the dark?" he asked the boy when he went inside.

"Sure, but ain't you goin'? I hate tuh leave you waddies."

"We're going all right, but not jest now. I wouldn't send you, but I need to get a word down. Now, when you get home you have your dad take a little note that's hid under your saddle and get it to Andy Clausen. Understand?"

"Yeah." Now that he saw himself in the rôle of an important message carrier Mickey was eager enough to go. "I'll take it to Andy myself."

"No, don't you show in that town jest yet. You have your dad take it."

Just before the moon rose Dakota slipped Mickey out through the bedroom window, while Skeeter held Skelton talking in the kitchen. With a friendly good-by the boy mounted the buckskin and rode down the brush fringe of the meadow. Dakota listened for some time, heard no disquieting sound, and returned to the house. Skelton glanced at him with a questioning frown, but said nothing.

The night passed quietly, with Dakota and Skeeter taking turns at sentry duty. Dakota rather expected some move from the Spike gang, but nothing materialized. From Skeeter's easy manner and his carelessness as a guard, Dakota surmised that the talk between Spike and the little gangster was responsible for the quiet night.

Spike appeared unusually good-humored when the outlaws came in to breakfast, and actually laughed at an anecdote related by Skeeter in underworld jargon.

With the rolling of cigarettes, Spike again sought a talk with Skeeter, later went out to hold a conference with his mates. Dakota tried carelessly to get from Skeeter a hint of the cause of Spike's broad grin.

"Youse jest wait till night, cull. I ain't so slow. Dem guys is easy, see?"

Suspicious of some trick, Dakota sought an upstairs window. A poker game had started under a pine. Monk and two others were going fishing. Dakota, reassured, was about to go down when he saw a man slipping through the timber toward the pasture. He watched the man saddle a horse and ride a roundabout course to reach the road. Evidently his departure was supposed to be a secret from those in the ranch house.

On that same morning Sheriff Andy Clausen was riding a brushy ridge that commanded a view of the road where it crossed the state line. Several times the sheriff halted to study the slope across the road. Once he saw a man moving in the trees. He dismounted then and with a pair of field glasses peered long at a

peak that rose just below the lower end of Timothy Basin. Again he sighted a man.

Clausen found a patch of shade and sat down, waiting with an impatience that often drew his gaze to the man sitting on that rocky peak. It was nearly ten o'clock when he saw a single puff of smoke rising from that lookout point.

"What now?" he snorted. "Only one comin' down. Dang that Dakota anyway. I thought from that word he got to Al that he was gittin' the hull bunch down."

Clausen waited until he saw a single rider loping down, then he mounted and rode leisurely out to intercept the man in a narrow wash. The horseman jerked his mount up and glared in surprise at the sheriff.

"'Lo, Sheriff." Then the rider managed a sickly grin. "I was jest goin' down to see you."

"That right?" Clausen recognized the man as one of the diners he had seen at Skelton's table the day before. "Well, you're seein' me now. What's up?"

"Spike's sendin' a message to you," said the man, easier now. "He said to tell you that them two crazy waddies is aimin' to rob the Red River Bank in Wardance. Seems like that white-head savvies real burglar stuff. They're goin' to dig into the safe, or blow it up."

"Well, well!" murmured Clausen. "That's right interestin'. How'd Spike git that news?"

"Pumped that Mickey kid, I guess—an' got some of it outa White Head. Spike thinks mebbe they'll pull it to-night, so you can watch out——"

"Yuh shore them two wasn't galavantin' aroun' last night?" interrupted Clausen sharply. "Or was you watchin' 'em?"

"We didn't hafta watch 'em," sniffed the outlaw. "Not after Spike got this ribbed up. Spike's goin' tuh send a couple of men to help 'em. Heh-heh-heh! You're to grab jest them two though."

"Grab hell!" Andy Clausen snapped erect. "They worked you fellers so you wouldn't watch 'em. Why, they done that job already—last night. Dug into the safe from in under—an' cleaned it complete."

"Well—I'll—be damned!" The man showed a whole lot more than surprise. "Cleaned that safe! The Red River Bank! My Gawd!"

Wildly the outlaw yanked his horse round, raked viciously with his spurs and raced back up the road toward Robin's Ranch.

"What yuh think of that?" Clausen stared after the disappearing rider. "Did I speak outa turn? But I had to—he said they was sendin' only two men down. Gosh! That feller acts like he had all his life's savin's in that bank."

CHAPTER VII

Spike Gets a Shock

DAKOTA was helping Skelton to cook dinner when the sounds of a hard-driven horse drew him to the front. He had just recognized the rider who was talking excitedly to Spike and Heaves as the man he had seen sneaking away that morning, when Spike broke away and started running toward the house.

"Now we have got to dicker," spluttered the outlaw when Dakota met him on the porch. "What you fellers want, anyway?"

"We jest want to live here in peace and happiness," returned Dakota pleasantly. "The sooner you get hep to that——"

"Aw, soak that!" growled Spike. "Damn' smart, you two. Why didn't you come right out an' say what you was up to? An' that Skeeter! Workin' me like he did."

"I don't know what you're talking about," retorted Dakota, and he didn't. "What's eatin' yuh?"

"Don't play innocent. All that little runt's talk was to keep us easy so you two could pull this. You knew we had our mark on that Red River Bank. An' now you've butted in an' grabbed it."

"Somebody's been tellin'," purred Dakota, fishing for further light on what had happened. "Who was it?"

"One of my men met Clausen down the road. That sheriff was tryin' to track you birds. He tol' my man that you two dug into the bank safe last night an' cleaned it."

"That's right interesting," said Dakota, and the news, coming from Sheriff Clausen, was all of that. "What yuh aim tuh do about it?"

"Dicker with you two smarties. How much you want now to turn that haul over to me?"

"That is a funny deal," mused Dakota. "After Skeeter and me pull a nice bank robbery, then you wanta buy it offen us. Where's the joker?"

"The idee is that we had our eye on that stuff." But Spike was almost sweating blood. "You got it all, didya, an' hid it?"

"We sure did, and it was a lulu. But to get back. I can't figger why you're buttin' in on this."

"You wouldn't," sneered Spike. "Now, how about five thousand to show us where you hid that loot?"

"Yuh must be joking." Dakota settled to play his part in this joke, whatever it was. "We didn't take time to do no counting, but I accidental seen a armful of paper money that musta been a hundred thousand. And for the life of me, I can't see where yuh got anything coming, Spike."

"You will!" flared the outlaw, and almost committed suicide by going for his gun. "You're goin' to turn that over——"

"Now, don't get excited, Spike," cautioned Dakota sweetly. "You might bust, or something. S'posin' I go talk this over with my pard. I ain't saying we'll sell out, but we might do something, if we can figger where is the joker."

"Damn' if I don't think you know all about that," muttered Spike and walked hastily away.

"I sure do know," chuckled Dakota, entering the house. "Yuh bet your sweet life I know. Hey, Skeeter!"

Dakota never was sure just how sincere Skeeter had been in the bank-robbing arrangement he had made with Spike Sevreen. But the little gangster did not hesitate now to tell all about it. Spike had suggested to him the idea of riding down and blowing that safe at night. Skeeter had fallen in with that plan, had explained just how it could be done, and Spike had become very enthusiastic.

"He's sorta changed his tune," observed Dakota. "Yuh see, Spike sent a man down to peddle that news to the sheriff, so Andy would be ready to grab us and keep hands off Spike's men who went along. But this messenger met Andy down below, and danged if Andy didn't spring the big joke that the bank was robbed last night. Couple of fellers that he said was us dug through the concrete, or blowed up the safe, or something."

"Hully chee! What a haul!"

"Oh, yes!" laughed Dakota. "An' certinly sure. You ain't using your head, pard. They ain't been no robbery. When that lad told Andy that we was coming down to rob the bank, Andy must have seen how that wouldn't help him any. Mebbe 'cause he found out that the gang wouldn't go along, which was the reason I give up that idee. So Andy sprung this. Why, that's as plain to me as if Andy had wrote me a letter."

"Aw, chee! We could 'a' glomed dat bank kale easy. But I was jes' tryin' to git 'em down there," added Skeeter hastily. "Aw, if youse wanta git dis gang, why not make 'em leave their gats outside? Den git 'em in at dat table to dinner, an' we kin jes' pile 'em up."

"We sure could, you bloodthirsty little devil, but that ain't the way we play in this country. And I don't know as I'd take the chance of letting them in here again. They're wild and desperate now. Chances are they'd jump us even if I made 'em leave their guns, which likely they wouldn't do. No, Andy's give me the idee. We'll get 'em all down now—if you got the guts to take a chance."

"Spring it, kid," said Skeeter shortly.

For half an hour they discussed their plan. Twice during that time Spike came up to the porch and called to Dakota. Each time he was told that the two were still talking it over. Dakota observed that Spike sent a man racing down to the lake after Monk and the other fishermen.

"Le's do it now." Skeeter began feeling various parts of his anatomy to make sure that his hidden pistols were safe. "Mebbe I'll pull it so I won't lose even dis gat."

"You'll lose your scalp if you get too rambunctious. Now get it through your head that this is brain work. You can't fight that gang alone. We'll leave the fighting to Andy Clausen."

"Aw, dat bull? I t'ink he's de bunk."

"Don't you fool yourself about old Andy. He's a mixing of fox and catamount. Andy's been working on our first deal right from the start. Yuh all ready?"

Spike Sevreen, impatient to a panic, was tramping up to the porch again when angry voices burst from the house. The thin spat of Skeeter's automatic was drowned in the bellow of a six-gun. Came a weird scream and the sounds as of ripping cloth. Bones Skelton was heard to plunge wildly out the back door.

"They've fit over it!" yelled Spike. "C'mon, fellers."

The roar of the six-shooter again mingled with the stuttering reports of the pistol.

"If they've killed each other," groaned Spike, peering cautiously through the door, "then we'll never find that stuff."

One of the men responsible for that shooting racket was still alive, anyway. Skeeter lurched up from back of the table, threw a shot from his pistol into the open bedroom door and dived through the window behind him. When Spike backed away from the front door, he was facing that automatic from the corner of the house.

"Look out for him!" snarled Skeeter. "I got 'im in de belly, but he ain't dead. He'll——"

"What you fightin' over?" demanded Spike, brightening hopefully. "I thought you two was good pards."

"It was over youse guys," muttered Skeeter. "He says we'll beat it wit' de swag. I says no! Youse guys is in good wit' dat bull. I wants to stick in wit' youse — give youse a lay — an' keep dis good graft goin'."

"That's the ticket!" Spike had no reproaches for Skeeter's double-crossing tactics, which was quite suspicious. "You've counted him out. We'll deal in with you—an' no sheriff will bother you long as you stick in with us."

"How do we divvy dat kale we glomed last night?" demanded Skeeter warily. "Dey's a nifty lot of green."

"We'll leave that to you," said Spike generously, but he winked at Monk, who had just come up. "Anything you say. Just so you line in with us. I'm thinkin' you'll make a good man in our business."

"K. O. wit' me," decided Skeeter, and stuffed his pistol into his coat pocket. "We better git back from here. Dat guy's layin' in dere wit' his cannon."

"Sure you got him?" asked Monk.

"Right t'rough de belly—twice mebbe. But he's swearin' he'll git me 'fore he croaks."

"Never mind him then," said Spike. "Go saddle up, fellers. Call the kid out, Monk. We don't want to chance losin' him while we're gone."

Monk bellowed a call to Mickey, but was answered by a shot from the bedroom. Spike swore and glowered angrily at the house.

"Looks like we'd have to burn that dump to drive the kid out," he growled.

"How about leaving one man to watch?" suggested Monk. "We gotta hurry an' go git that stuff 'fore——"

"How about you stayin'?" interrupted Spike.

"Not me," objected Monk, who plainly wanted to be in on the findings of that bank loot. "Leave Blacky."

Skeeter made just the proper amount of objection to going after the proceeds of that mythical bank robbery, explaining that it was well hidden and could be recovered at any time.

Spike became very friendly in his efforts to learn the exact location of the cache, but Skeeter was vague. He had no idea where the state line was, and could find the place only from some trees he had spotted along the road. Spike didn't like to think of crossing the line, but he was in such a nervous condition by this time that he would have ridden right into Wardance.

Finally Spike's insistence prevailed. Skeeter consented to lead them, and with impatient haste the outlaws caught up horses and saddled. Somebody mentioned

the absence of Clausen's buckskin, but that was explained by Heaves, who found a panel of the pole fence down. Skeeter was given a mean-eyed pinto, and he mounted with only a grimace at the unfamiliar stock saddle. Shortly the party rode away, leaving Blacky, the whiskey-guzzling half-breed, sitting in the woodshed waiting for Dakota to die.

CHAPTER VIII

With Gats and Six-guns

THE other member of this play-acting team was far from dying, however. As soon as Dakota heard the outlaws ride away, he strolled out of the bedroom and into the kitchen, where he met Bones Skelton who was entering cautiously from the rear.

"It's time for us to talk like a couple of brothers," said Dakota, careful to keep out of sight of the guard in the woodshed. "The game is up with Spike and his gang. You're powerful glad of that, I know. It musta been hell on you to have this outfit come tearing in here, keep you scared tuh death, and make you cook for 'em."

"Huh?" Skelton batted his eyes at Dakota. "Aw, they didn't——"

"They sure did," insisted Dakota, hunting in the woodbox for a stick to whittle. "They come in here and took possession of your little ranch. You couldn't do a thing against them. You tried a coupla times to sneak away and tell your troubles to Andy Clausen, but they caught you at it and threatened to plant you down in your meadow. Think it over a minnit, Bones, and you'll see that I guessed it—exactly."

Bones Skelton moistened his lips, peered plaintively at Dakota's smiling face, then began with trembling hands to pull at his slipping overalls. "I getcha," he mumbled at last. "Aimin' to save the ol' man's skin ag'in. I oughta knowed you wouldn't be classin' yourself with skum like this. Uh-huh. Doin' a little job for Andy, ain't yuh?"

"You're a good guesser," drawled Dakota. "Now, seeing you're an old saddle mate of mine, I don't need to say any more. I'm in quite a hurry. You start out with your calf feed, or something, and let that Blacky lad ask you am I still kicking. You say you reckon I'm dead, and go do your chores. Mebbe he'll come in to see."

Before Dakota had finished with those instructions, Bones Skelton had seen the light. For only a moment did he scowl fiercely at the fading picture of riches gained through his association with Spike Sevreen. Then his old eyes brightened as he blinked down at his green meadow. "Guess I can make a go of this ranch, once I get the fences fixed an' that russled stock run out."

Skelton went outside and the half-breed sentry fell for the old man's statement that the gun-fighting puncher surely was dead. Shortly Blacky tiptoed through the kitchen and on into the big room. Dakota's gun reached out from behind the door. Five minutes later the still surprised outlaw was lying on a bed skilfully anchored to the posts.

Dakota went out to where Skelton was holding a calf's head deep in a bucket of skimmed milk. "There's a lot of questions I'd like to ask you," said the puncher, "but I ain't got time. I'm out to trail that bunch. That little trick that my pard and me pulled will drive that hull gang slap into Andy Clausen. I want to be in behind to keep 'em from coming back."

"But if you don't clean 'em, an' they come back here," muttered Skelton; "then it'll be all off with the ol' man."

"Mebbe not. Soon as I get my hawss I'll go hide that breed upstairs. If some of the gang should get away from us and come back, you can play innocent."

Dakota was pleasantly surprised to find that the outlaws had not taken such a good looking animal as White Foot. He saddled, returned to the house and transferred his prisoner to the upstairs room that had been occupied by Mickey. After securely binding and gagging the half-breed, Dakota hurried out to his horse.

He had scarcely hoped that Spike would follow the main road, so he was not surprised to find the fresh tracks turning up a brushy draw some two miles below.

"'Fraid they'll run into Andy," he reasoned. "Well, if that old boy is working right they'll run onto him 'most anywhere they go. Gosh, but didn't they get excited! Anyone 'ud think they had a big claim against that bank."

The outlaws were riding hard, so Dakota was able to learn from the torn-out soil. With the party well ahead of him, unsuspecting a trailer in their rear and impatient to secure the proceeds of that bank robbery, there appeared to Dakota little need for caution.

He urged White Foot to a gallop across a bare saddle and down a timbered ridge. The tracks he was following dropped into a steep-banked wash, wound down it for half a mile, then worked out upon an oak flat. Dakota, plunging on, rounded a clump of brush and fairly plowed into the party he was trailing.

The outlaws were in a huddle watching a group of riders approaching along the slope of the next ridge. But a number of them had heard the racket in their rear. Dakota found himself covered by half a dozen weapons.

"What's this?" howled Spike Sevreen. "Heluva spry dead man, you are! I bet you don't run no blazer on us this time. Git his guns, Monk."

Dakota had to submit to being disarmed. The outlaws had all the advantage, and they appeared desperate now. The puncher looked at Skeeter. The little gangster seemed utterly bewildered by this turn.

"If you'll let me take one shot at that dirty little rat," said Dakota hurriedly, hopeful of maintaining the robbery part of the deception, "you can have my share of that haul."

"I t'ought I ripped yer belly wit' me gat," muttered Skeeter uncertainly.

"You did after a fashion. Not so bad I couldn't tie it up. Well, Spike, what's the big idee? I thought we made medicine together. Is that Andy coming?"

"No." Spike appeared too disturbed over something to wonder much over Dakota's miraculous escape from Skeeter's pistol. "Say, White Head, how far is it to where you buried that?"

Skeeter pawed at his cap, the while stealing a glance at Dakota; then his rat eyes narrowed craftily. "I tell youse I can't find it from dis way," he whined. "We ditched de swag jes' by dat big road from de burg. Over dat way." He waved his hand in a semi-circle to indicate most anywhere.

Spike actually seemed about to run as he looked again at the four approaching riders, now only a few hundred yards away. "It's aw ri'," he growled, plainly trying to reassure himself rather than his men. "We got the both of 'em now. They'll dig that stuff up—an' do it damn' quick!"

Dakota had long since recognized the four riders and that recognition had not added to his peace of mind. For they were Pete Barenden and the three gunmen who had been with the banker and Clausen at Robin's Ranch.

"Keep your guns on these lads," Spike warned his men. "I'll fix it."

The big banker rode up, betraying no fear of the armed group. He started to speak, but broke off as his eyes fell upon Dakota and Skeeter.

"Here's your two robbers," spluttered Spike. "We was takin' 'em down to the sheriff."

"I see you doing that," sniffed Barenden. "You're only a quarter from the state line, and Andy's got a fence built outa deputies. Well, I wasn't hunting them two, but we'll take 'em down. I was kinda worried about Al Carpenter's kid. Al ain't been around no more to see about raising the money."

Spike had greater worries than Mickey and the ransom money. "This whitehead is yaller," he said. "He'll show us where they buried it."

"Yella, am I?" Skeeter's squeal drowned Barenden's demands for an explanation. "Youse guys been stringin' me, hey? Me gat! It's gone!"

"What's this argument?" snapped the banker, showing scant interest in Skeeter's discovery that his pistol had been taken from his coat pocket. "What is it that's buried?"

"Aw, we want to show you that we're on the square," mumbled Spike, with a

wink that did not escape Dakota. "We was goin' to make this little runt show us where they hid that haul, then we was goin' to take it down to you."

"I don't get this," said Barenden. "What haul is this you're talking about?"

"Why, the stuff outa your safe," replied Spike, mopping perspiration. "These two slipped into town last night and dug into your bank. Cleaned it out."

"They did? You've been smoking hop, Spike. Where'd you get that yarn?"

"We got it straight," insisted Spike. "You ain't sayin' you don't know about it?"

"Hell!" sneered Barenden. "Somebody's been filling you with wind. Nobody could dig into my safe. It's got three feet of railroad iron all around it. And there's nothing gone. I opened that safe this morning."

Even with this revelation utterly ruining his plan, Dakota came near getting a laugh out of the wild-eyed astonishment of the outlaws. Spike Sevreen looked at Monk, then on to the others. He saw only popping eyes and open mouths. Finally the outlaw leader whirled to Skeeter.

"You sneakin' little gopher! What was you up to?"

"Aw, chee!" Skeeter not being good at deep lying, could find only one reply to that. "Youse guys sprung dat on us. Said youse had heard it from dat bull."

"Andy!" Spike recalled the source of his robbery information. "I—we got onto it that these two was goin' down to blow your safe, Pete," he explained. "I sent a man down to tell—the sheriff. But he met Andy out trailin'—an' Andy tol' him about your safe bein' robbed las' night."

"He did, huh? Why, you poor weak sisters! That was a trick of Andy's to get you all down across the line. Ever since that sheriff horned in with us to go up to the ranch, he's had twenty puncher deputies hid out just below the line. And he's got a lockout on Antelope Peak."

Dakota was wondering how long it would take Spike's slow mind to connect Skeeter and himself with the sheriff's trick, when Barenden continued:

"Don't you worry about something that's too deep for you, Spike. You've been trying to do me a good turn, and I appreciate that. You've been good to me all along—keeping hands off my bank. I'll see that you don't lose by that. So now, if you'll slip us those two, we'll mosey back."

Dakota had cause then to do some rapid thinking. The chances of Skeeter and a certain young puncher were not worth much now, and they would be worth still less once this banker and his gunman aids took charge of them. Of course Barenden's last speech had been a bit of acting, crude and unnecessary, in Dakota's opinion, considering the probability that the two prisoners would not live to repeat anything that was said.

"It looks like you had us," Dakota said softly. "But you, Barenden, better you lissen to me. I don't reckon it's 'cause we killed your cashier that you want us."

"It is!" snapped the banker. "Ben Nelson was a good man."

"I don't doubt that, but I happen to know that he was showing his goodness by working with Spike Sevreen. Now, of course you know that Skeeter and me have been working with Andy Clausen all the time.

"And you know that Andy's got a man watching this session right now with glasses." He indicated the peak from which puffs of smoke were rising. "If you want to save that stuff in your bank, Barenden, you better protect Skeeter and me."

It required some time for Spike Sevreen to grasp Dakota's confession that he was an officer; but when the surprised outlaw finally understood he bellowed and went for his gun. Barenden halted his killing intention with an impatient gesture.

"I'll let you do that, Spike," he snarled, "but wait till I get away. Pretty wise, ain't you?" he sneered at Dakota. "Well, maybe you did fool me a little with that stunt in the jail, but I savvied you as soon as I seen Andy sneaking deputies along the line.

"You bet your sweet life I intended for Ben to get you that day in the bank. But you got Ben killed, so you two have as much chance of connecting with Andy

Clausen as Spike has of growing a new hand."

Dakota smiled, but scarcely from mirth. Barenden's admission that he was the power back of the Spike Sevreen gang was of sinister significance, for it revealed the crooked banker's determination to remove these two dangerous witnesses.

"It's this grinning kid that's holding Al Carpenter from doing business." Barenden was taking up the matter that had brought him up to see Spike. "We'll fix that, but we've got to hurry with that Carpenter deal. Andy's getting suspicious of me. With this Dakota out though—and Carpenter paying up—— Say, Spike, howcome Andy's horse to get away?"

Spike glared for a moment, then he fairly howled. "That kid! I bet he got away on that hoss!"

"You've lost the kid?" roared Barenden. "Now we'll have to——No, I don't guess the kid rode that horse. This buckskin was packing a saddle, but nobody was riding him. He's feeding alongside the road to town. We'll go look him over on the way back.

"Now"—he squinted speculatively at the sheriff's lookout peak——"it wouldn't do for me to bother these two. So, Spike, it's up to you." He waved his hand and turned away.

Dakota understood that. Barenden, hopeful of keeping himself clean with Andy Clausen, would ride away, leaving Spike to silence the two men who knew too much.

Dakota glanced at Skeeter, whose half-wild pinto, be-deviled by as tricky a jockey as was ever ruled from the turf, was dancing about at the edge of the trail. The little gangster's right hand was in his coat pocket. Dakota stealthily scanned the surroundings, mapped a perilious route to a dense thicket of young pines a short distance from the trail.

"Wait a minnit, Barenden," he said sharply. The banker swung round. "We're not quite ready to be dry-gulched. Did you see my friend Skeeter do his great pocket-shootin' act? There in the bank? Well, he's all set to do it some more. It's good! Watch how he does it —if a single one of you wiggles his finger. It's you, Mister Funny Banker, that he's pointin' his pocket at."

Barenden could not fail to see the danger to himself in this long chance play of the two doomed prisoners. Skeeter, with his automatic pointed at Barenden, surely held the top hand. He could be shot down, but not before that deadly little pistol had spatted its missiles of death into the banker's body.

"You haven't fooled me, Barenden," said Dakota, talking rapidly to cover certain moves of his horse. "I've had my hunch about you ever since I found out your cashier was laying for me in the bank. And when you rode to the ranch with Andy Clausen I seen it all plain. Especially when you got kinda sick at seeing Spike and his gang feeding without guns.

"If you'd been on the square, you and Andy and these three gun sharks would 'a' cleaned the Spike gang right there—even if Andy was outa his territory. And if Andy hadn't been a little wise to you, old-timer, he'd have started something. So there you are."

"Nix on de gab!" grumbled Skeeter. "Youse beat it, cull, while I——"

"He's bluffin'," burst out Monk, at last remembering something. "I've got his little pop-gun in my pocket."

"Grab him then!" howled Barenden.

Monk made a dive at Skeeter. At the same time another of Spike's men drove his horse in front of the little gangster. Skeeter thrust the corner of his coat far to the side in an effort to shoot past the man in front and to get Barenden. Smoky flame puffed from his coat, but disconcerted by the human barrier and his own dancing mount, Skeeter succeeded only in emptying his pistol into the brush.

Long before this Dakota had moved. His spur tickled White Foot's flank. The little bay leaped to the side and against Heaves' horse. Almost before Skeeter's first shot Dakota had snatched out the left hand gun of the coughing Heaves, and had lifted White Foot to Skeeter's side.

"Beat it, Skeeter!" he yelled, and went into action with his captured gun.

Dakota dropped one of Spike's men with a split-second to spare, saw a gun coming up on his left and ruined its owner's shoulder. Skeeter, crouched low upon his horse, was fumbling in his clothes for a fresh pistol, the while backing his mount into the brush.

Firing deliberately, realizing that he had only a few shots and no time to reload, Dakota sought to cover his pal's getaway. But Skeeter seemed to be in no great haste to retreat. He produced a second pistol with sleight-of-hand magic, and began peppering away with the weapon held openly in his hand. His shots were registering, but with little effect, although the slight wounds they were causing added to the distress of the outlaws. Horses nipped by those tiny bullets and frightened by the general confusion, were plunging wildly.

Spike dropped his gun to save himself from being dumped by his bucking horse. Men rolled from their animals and scrambled into the rocks across the trail. Skeeter emptied his second pistol just as Dakota's six-gun hammer clicked on the empty cylinder.

"If youse is ready," called the little gangster, "le's beat it."

They went then, speeded by shots from the rocks beyond the trail. A hundred feet through the brush and they were safe in the shelter of the pine thicket. Dakota heard behind him the wild bellow of Pete Barenden.

"Get 'em, you fools! Or the hull game's up!"

"The game's up for you, Pete," chuckled Dakota. "How'd you come out, pard?"

"Hully chee! Youse showed me suthin', cull. Wit' one of dem cannons, youse was bumpin' 'em, an' me little gat was only ticklin'. I gotta learn to shoot dat kinda gun."

CHAPTER IX

On the Short End—As Usual

DAKOTA was not so much put out by the failure to get the gang down to Andy Clausen as he was over a distressing suspicion connected with the riderless buckskin that Barenden had mentioned.

What had become of Mickey? The range boy was too good a rider to have been dumped and thus lost his horse. It looked as if he must have deliberately abandoned the animal, which would be bad in another way, for Clausen probably would not get the message that Dakota had hidden under the saddle.

From the security of a timbered ridge Dakota watched the efforts of the outlaws to trail the escaping men. Barenden, shouting and waving his arms, was assisting with his three gunmen. The outlaws had suffered some casualties. Two of Spike's men seemed to be missing, and Monk was whitely bandaged about the chest.

Shortly Dakota witnessed a confab among the trailers that resulted in a splitting up of the outlaw party. Barenden and his three men rode back toward Wardance. Two of Spike's men raced away to the south on a cross-country route. Spike and the four remaining men resumed the trailing.

"We've got to fool them," observed Dakota. "Make 'em think we're right tickled to get away with our skins. Then we'll slip back to the ranch and——"

"Aw, chee!" exploded Skeeter. "Ain't youse got enough of dis funny bizness? De kid has blew an'——"

"I ain't so sure about that Mickey boy. He's jest kid enough to come poking back in here. Or mebbe he didn't get well started. I betcha! I strung him with the idee that I was sending him out a-purpose to get that note to Andy. He's got to thinking that Andy's horse would go straight home, and has turned him loose. Well, if you've got enough of this, Skeeter, I'll stake you to railroad fare and you can go."

"Nix on dat! I'm stickin' wit' youse. But dis sorta fightin' is de bunk. Youse had a chance to bump de hul gang up in dat big house."

Dakota, by this time dubious of ever teaching Skeeter anything of the rangeland code, made no reply to that, and led the way toward a rocky ridge. Shortly he turned aside, zigzagged down a series of

ledges to a timbered slope and headed for Robin's Ranch.

"That'll discourage 'em," he said. "Come dark they'll give it up and go home. We better get there ahead and be ready for 'em."

It was nearly dark by the time the two reached the piney fringe back of Skelton's ranch house. They rode cautiously down, but halted when they heard horses pounding into the yard below.

"Spike!" reasoned Dakota. "He's give up the trailing. Got another hen on, I bet. Well, let's leave the hawsses and sneak."

On foot they worked down through the pines until near the ranch house. Through the evening dusk they could see one man taking five horses down to the pasture. The others of the returning party had gone inside and were making demands for supper.

"It looks like we better grab them five, Skeeter," said Dakota after he had watched the horse wrangler come back to the house. "Five—with that Monk ape bad nicked. Mebbe we can cut her. S'posing you wait here till I see how they're located."

Feeling the need of a second gun, Dakota went on a prowl through the cabins of the outlaws. After a pawing search by the light of matches he found a six-gun in a sack under a bunk. Pausing only to make sure that the weapon was a .45 that would take the shells in his belt, he made stealthy approach to an end window of the ranch house, and peeked inside.

The five outlaws were at the table and Skelton was carrying dishes of food from the kitchen. Evidently Spike had been questioning Skelton about the disappearance of the half-breed guard.

"He musta went off trailin' that Dakoty, I'm tellin' yuh," lied the old man. "He was gone when I come in from feedin' my calf. An' I found out then that Dakoty wasn't in that bedroom."

The listening puncher shook his head dubiously. That yarn would go fine unless Spike found the trussed-up guard. Still, Skelton had been outside when Dakota made the capture. The old man should be able to convince Spike of his ignorance.

Many men in Dakota's position would not have hesitated to settle at the window and drop as many of the outlaws as he could for a starter. Dakota had scruples against such a course, however. He never had shot a man down in cold blood or from ambush. Always he must give his man a chance.

He considered his next move, wondered if he could separate the men, speculated on the possibility of Barenden coming to the ranch. If he could get a word with Skelton he was sure the old man would do his share. With Skeeter at this window and Skelton in the rear, and with himself at the front door, the advantage of surprise should offset the outlaws' advantage of numbers. Dakota started to slip back.

A terrific bump sounded upstairs. Dakota halted, snorting his disgust. The half-breed prisoner, who had been so securely tied, had managed to make a racket. Dakota swung upon the porch to look through the front door, and at once he witnessed a startling development.

For Skelton's panicky plunge for a Winchester had drawn the suspicious attention of the outlaws. Dakota stared, surprised and dismayed that Skelton should so lose his head. The old man could have stuck to his yarn of complete ignorance of the half-breed's presence upstairs, and insisted that Dakota must have made the capture. But here he was confessing complicity by trying to get that rifle.

This he failed to do. Spike started for his gun, but he had no need for it. The asthmatic Heaves had defeated Skelton's move by swinging his fist to the old man's jaw.

"Set on him!" bawled Spike. "Bones, y' dirty ol' rat! What y' up to?"

Skelton muttered something, but he was too dazed by Heaves' blow to make himself intelligible. Two of the men ran up the stairs. The mighty crash of a six-gun greeted their arrival above. Then came a sobbing cry.

"That loony Mickey!" groaned Dakota. "He come back and was here with Bones when the others rode in. No wonder Bones went bugs. But now they'll find that breed!"

Spike hurried upstairs to learn the cause of the shooting. When he came back his profane howls were a strange mingling of satisfaction and killing rage.

"Blacky! Hog-tied right in this house! An' where'd the kid git a spring for that ol' gun? He come near pluggin' one of the boys. Bones! I bet you knowed that them two was Andy's men. I bet you was in on that trick they was pullin' to git us down."

Dakota stood in the shadow beside the door, waiting tensely, trying to determine just what to do. He had to do something now. Both Skelton and the boy were in immediate danger. Spike Sevreen, maddened to a frenzy, was in a fit mood to kill them both. Then Dakota heard Mickey's broken reply to Spike's questioning.

"Aw I jest went for a ride. That darn buckskin piled me an' run off. I was afraid you'd lam me, so I climbed in the window. Bones didn't know I was there. An' I was jest comin' down to see you when I took that tumble. My gun went off itself."

"I wonder did his mammy teach him to tell the truth," chuckled Dakota. "He's got a head, that kid."

A sound below the porch caused Dakota to whirl, his hand darting to his gun.

"Chee!" whispered Skeeter. "I near plugged youse! Com'on, beat it. Dey's annuder gang comin'."

As Dakota retreated he heard the drumming of horses' shoes on the poles of the bridge below. Spike heard the sounds of arrival, too, and came plowing out upon the porch.

"Here they come now," he called to those inside. "Now we'll git action."

Dakota jumped to the depressing conclusion that Pete Barenden had made an appointment to meet the others here. That would make things bad. With Barenden and his three gunmen reinforcing those in the house, the chances of rescuing Mickey and Skelton were fearfully slim.

Crouching behind a tree at the corner of the house, Dakota and Skeeter watched the newcomers ride up to the porch. There were only three of them, Dakota observed. Then one of them spoke. It was Wind River Bill, one of the two Spike men whom Dakota had seen ride away to the south.

"Got 'im, didya?" howled Spike. "Bring him in here. The kid didn't git away, but this is better. We'll fix things now."

And Dakota, feeling the chill as of an icicle down his back, recognized the bound man who was now tumbled upon the porch. It was Mickey's father, Al Carpenter.

CHAPTER X

Dakota Lives Up to His Rep

AGAIN at the end window with Skeeter beside him, Dakota surveyed the scene inside the room. Al Carpenter, his hands tied behind him, had been hustled in. The wounded Monk was sitting astride Bones Skelton. Blacky, the half-breed whom Dakota had captured, was stumbling from the stairs, rubbing his stiff neck. Mickey was sprawled in a chair, blinking in dazed astonishment at his father.

"Quit that snivlin', kid!" howled Spike. "Lissen here, Al. Why didn't you dig up that fifteen thousand yest'd'y?"

"Turn me loose for one minnit!" raged Carpenter. "An' I'll show you—all of you! You're the dirtiest skum——"

Spike speared at the bound man with his dagger-armed stump, but Carpenter managed to reel aside. Mickey screamed and started hammering at Spike. Heaves promptly hurled the boy to the floor.

"I'll fix things now," sneered Spike. "Tie that kid good, Heaves. Time I git through with him ol' Al here will be ready to come through."

Dakota dropped his lips to Skeeter's ear. "I'm going in and get that kid out. If you're still with me you can——"

"I'm wit' youse. But don't youse tell me what to do."

"All the bars are down!" snapped Dakota. "Lay here with your armful of gats—and do your worst. Get 'em in the back—or anywhere that's easy. But shoot closer than you did down in the trail. Your pepper-gun jest seems to make 'em mad. Look out for Bones and Carpenter

—and me. I'm going right through now."

As Dakota slipped round to the rear door a wail from Mickey told him that Spike's fiendish torture was starting. The puncher walked softly through the kitchen, paused for an instant at the door, then plunged into the room. Bumping Heaves one way and Spike another, he caught up the screaming boy and leaped through the front door. He was out before the first shot sounded from inside.

There had been shots from Skeeter's pistol, however, and resulting howls of pain. The lamp on the table crashed. A bedlam arose in the darkened room.

"Outside!" bawled Spike. "It's that Dakoty an' the runt!"

Dakota dropped Mickey behind a tree in the yard and started running back toward the house. Then Spike yelled a fresh order.

"Hold on, fellers. Stay in here. I got a idee."

Spike Sevreen's idea must have been born of his knowledge of Dakota as learned from various rumors. The young puncher suspected what the outlaw would do.

"You, Dakoty!" called Spike. "I got a gun on Al Carpenter. An' Heaves is rarin' to plug ol' Bones. So let's argy."

Here was a situation that required consideration. Dakota did his thinking as he ran through a strip of moonlight to the shadow below the porch. Rapidly he computed the number of outlaws that should still be in fighting condition. Two had been disabled or killed in that fight on the trail. If Skeeter had failed to do any damage just now, there were eight of the outlaws inside.

Monk was wounded, however, and Skeeter surely must have nipped some of them. Maybe there were only seven now. But two men against seven, when those seven had as insurance Al Carpenter and old Skelton! It was a situation not at all to Dakota's liking.

"You two come in here!" raged Spike. "If you don't we'll finish Al and Bones."

Dakota wondered what the result would be should he accept that invitation. There would be no advantage, he decided instantly. Dakota might be reckless, but not to that extent. Outside he had a chance to aid those two, but to give himself into the power of Spike and his gang would be suicide for himself and murder for Carpenter and Skelton.

"Can't do that, Spike," he called. "But I'm ready to quit. If you'll leave them two in there and come out, we'll let you get your horses and go."

Spike's sneering laugh answered him. The outlaw viewed that offer from the reasoning of his own black heart. Were he in Dakota's place he might make such a promise, and hesitate not at all to shoot down his enemies when they came out.

"Turn loose on 'em, son!" roared Al Carpenter. "Never mind me. Wipe out the dirty skunks. They can't——"

There came the squash of a blow, plainly caused by a gun barrel falling on the rancher's head. Dakota backed off and started round the house, intent on slipping through a rear window and mingling with the outlaws in the darkness.

He had heard nothing from Skeeter since he came out with Mickey, and felt a little uneasy. Skeeter would have scant consideration for Skelton and Carpenter, and might do anything. Dakota decided that he had better make known his intention to get inside, otherwise Skeeter might open up on moving shadows in the room.

His scout past the window where he had left Skeeter revealed no sign of the little pistol artist. Dakota went on to the rear and continued past the kitchen door, to halt at a bedroom window. As he tried the sash to see if it could be raised he heard a movement in the woodshed. It must be Skeeter, he thought, and would have gone back to see what the man was up to, but he had found that the window opened easily. Hearing no suspicious sound in the bedroom and nothing further from the woodshed, he threw himself over the sill.

A moment of ticklish groping in the darkness and Dakota had reached the door that opened into the front room. The door was closed, but he could hear whispering voices and shuffling footsteps beyond it. Then Spike, nervous over the silence outside, yelled again.

"Say something, Dakoty! An' make the runt holler too. I'm goin' to keep you located."

Dakota was in no position to reply. He found the door knob, softly turned it and pulled the door open. Dimly in the darkened room beyond he could see the shadowy outlines of crouching men. Then Spike repeated his demand to Dakota and Skeeter to speak, and promptly there came a response from outside.

"Youse guys better come out. If youse don't we'll burn dis shack."

"I don't guess so!" snorted Spike. "We've got two of your friends in here."

It struck Dakota that Spike didn't know that little gangster very well, or his manner of fighting. Fear of what Skeeter might do drove Dakota to a hurried creeping across the corner of the big room. He touched a man on his left, then collided with another on his right.

"Quit that racket!" growled Spike. "An' watch that kitchen door. It 'ud be jest like that Dakoty to sneak in."

Dakota, now wedged in between two of the outlaws, who naturally took him for one of their mates, started crawling to the right, toward where he had seen Skelton lying. He pressed by another man kneeling on the floor, then his out-thrust hand came in contact with a bony leg. It was Skelton with Monk sitting on him.

To the grunting protests of Skelton's guard, Dakota shoved past and into the kitchen doorway. Cautious feeling had told him that no other outlaw was close to Skelton and the man who sat on him. With a serious job of cleaning to do Dakota promptly drew a gun, reversed it and tapped Skelton's captor on the head. Monk lurched over and bumped heavily upon the floor.

"Smash him Monk!" snarled Spike, who must have thought the commotion to be caused by Skelton's struggles. "Or tie him up some way."

Dakota almost chuckled at that, for Skelton had scrambled to his knees and was crawling into the kitchen. There was no opportunity and little need for directing speech. Dakota heard Skelton rising to his feet, and wondered hopefully if the old man had been foresighted enough to cache a weapon outside.

The affair looked much better to Dakota now. There remained only to crawl in among the outlaws and locate Al Carpenter. He had little hope of getting Carpenter out so easily, but under cover of the darkness and the confusion, he thought he had a good chance.

As he advanced again Dakota became conscious of a white glow lighting the room and revealing the dark shapes of the men. Spike Sevreen bawled a frantic warning. Then a blazing object shot through the window and to the farther side of the room. Flaming brands tumbled upon the floor. Licking streamers of fire ran up the tinder-dry newspapers that covered the front wall. Instantly the room was light as day.

Even as he dodged back to the kitchen door Dakota realized that Skeeter had run true to form. He had gathered pitch pine in the woodshed, lighted it and thrown it into the room. Scarcely before the flaming brands had fallen, there came the snapping reports of the little automatic.

One of the outlaws bellowed like a brand-burned calf. Several of them returned Skeeter's fire, but desisted at once to join their mates in a panicky rush for the front door. But that exit was now barred by a wall of flame, and the outlaws turned back. Sight of Dakota in the kitchen drove them next to attempt escape through the bedroom. Dakota sighed with relief as the men came tearing back before a rifle fire from Skelton at the bedroom window.

The outlaws might have found some other window exit from the burning room, but peppered by Skeeter's pistol and bombarded by Skelton's rifle, and feeling themselves being rapidly roasted, they were in no fit mental condition for clear thinking. They saw only the necessity to fight their way past the only tangible barrier—that young gunman in the kitchen—which was suicide.

For Dakota, with a gun at each hip, lips smiling and eyes grim, was set for open battle. He felt a bullet nip his leg, and heard the jangle in tin pans behind him.

The first man to plunge out, his gun blazing, went down in a spread-eagle sprawl. A second, firing across his mate's body, crumpled. A limping man, wounded by Skeeter, would have been allowed to pass, but he raised his six-gun—and lost the hand that held it. The wounded outlaw dropped to his knees and crawled into a corner.

The coughing Heaves bulked large against the background of flames. His gun roared, but scarcely before he felt the hot breath of the bullet past his cheek, Heaves had gone to join his comrades on the shambles of the kitchen floor.

Two frenzied outlaws, discouraged by the fate of their comrades, tried for the bedroom, but three rapidly fired shots from Skelton drove them back. Desperately they returned the fire, and Dakota was chilled by a groaning cry from Skelton. But the old man's rifle roared again, and the two men tried to crowd together through the kitchen door, their six-guns crashing as they sought to remove that grim barrier to their escape. Dakota, sure of victory now, merely disabled the two with well-placed shots.

Poised like a waiting tiger, Dakota peered into the big room. No others appearing, he surveyed the result of the battle. Six men lay and sprawled dead or wounded in the kitchen.

There should be two more. He could account for one of them. Monk, the man he had struck with his gun, lay in the burning room, still unconscious from that crack on the head. The other was Spike Sevreen, whom Dakota had not seen nor heard since the fight started.

With his left arm raised to shield his face from the blistering heat, Dakota stepped round the bodies on the floor and thrust his head through the door. A gun spat fire fairly in his face from round the jamb. Even as the gun in Dakota's lifted hand came round, something smashed with crushing force upon his arm.

Then Spike, his shirt smouldering and his black beard curling, snapped his empty gun at Dakota, dived through the fire and out the front door. Dakota reached down for his dropped gun, but found his left hand powerless even to feel for it. Spike's blow had broken his arm.

A disabled arm meant nothing to Dakota now. Already his tear-blinded eyes were searching through the smoke and flame for Al Carpenter. He saw Monk first, halfway across the room. Then he sighted Carpenter lying under the table.

The spatting of Skeeter's automatic had ceased. But as Dakota started toward Carpenter, a six-gun blared from beyond the porch and a bullet clipped the door jamb. Spike was firing at Dakota through the front door.

And those shots from the front continued as Dakota ran into the room and to Carpenter's side. Bullets splintered the table as he sought to grasp the bound man who lay under it.

Skeeter yelled outside and the thin ripping of pistol shots broke out again. Dakota caught Carpenter's shirt collar and began dragging the rancher into the kitchen. Just as he reached the door he felt Carpenter shudder and go limp. Spike had scored from his ambush in front.

Skelton met Dakota in the kitchen. The old man was trailing a rifle in one hand, the other hung useless at his side.

"Didya git 'em all?" he gasped.

"All but Spike. Here—get Carpenter out—an' these devils. I gotta get Monk."

The terrified scream of the reviving Monk drew Dakota again into that furnace room. The heat was fearful upon his head, and he was painfully aware of flame licking up his chest. Blinded by smoke and fire he groped for the wounded bandit, finally found him nearly to the front door. Crazed by the heat, and scarcely conscious, Monk kicked and struck, fighting his rescuer. Dakota managed to get a grip on his arm. Because the front door was much nearer, and there being now little choice of route through the fire, Dakota dragged Monk out that way. He staggered through the door, gulped in the cool air, started to roll Monk to the edge of the porch.

Then Dakota felt himself whirled half round. As he fell over Monk he saw vaguely the distorted face of Spike Sevreen peering from behind a tree. Again

came the stutter of Skeeter's pistol. Dakota rolled off the porch and tried to reach back for the wounded outlaw. His right arm refused to act. Faintly he heard a snarling voice.

"I t'ought dat dirty Spike was dead. I'll fix 'im!"

Dakota's last hazy thought before complete blackness came was of Pete Barenden and his three gunmen. The last sound he heard was a soft pattering like rain as Skeeter emptied a pistol into the body of Spike Sevreen.

CHAPTER XI

With Nerve Alone

FOR ages, it seemed to Dakota, he was struggling with a depressing conviction that he had started something that he had been unable to finish. About the time that he connected this nightmare with Pete Barenden and his three gunmen he awoke to the realization that it was daylight, and that he was lying on a blanket in the yard. His opening eyes fell first upon the smouldering ruins of Skelton's ranch house.

He saw then that he was lying between two men. On his right lay Al Carpenter, his middle swathed in a blanket. On the other side Skeeter sat propped against a tree, a bloody rag round his head, one trousers leg cut off.

The little gangster grinned with white, pain-twisted lips. "I t'ought de smell of dat coffee would bring youse back, cull."

"What happened?" Dakota tried to move and part of his question was answered; both his arms were disabled. "Bones—and the kid?"

"Dat kid's de only well man dey is left. Dat Bones feller got one arm 'most shot off. But say, bo! Wait till youse see dat gang we went up against! Hully chee!"

"Got some of 'em?" muttered Dakota, his troubled thoughts still upon the whereabouts of Barenden.

"Hell! Youse jes' piled 'em up!" chortled Skeeter. "We got a reg'lar horspital up in one of dem cabins. Dat kid's been herdin' an' draggin' guys aroun' here for hours."

"You don't mean we got 'em all?"

"Youse did, I'm tellin' y'. I could hit 'em, but my gats didn't—— I got dat Spike t'ough. T'ree of 'em is dead. De rest is putty sick."

Skelton, with one arm bandaged across his thin chest, but surprisingly happy, came up carrying a pot of coffee. Mickey was at his heels with tin cups.

"Yuh come outa it, didya, Dakoty?" sighed Skelton. "That's the ticket."

Mickey began serving coffee to his patients. Dakota observed that Al Carpenter gained the boy's first attention.

"Gee, Pop! Yuh're all right, ain't yuh?"

"Shore, jest a scratch. Feed that javy to Dakota. I can handle a cup myself. He can't."

A cup of coffee stimulated Dakota to look ahead, and he sighted some dark clouds. "How we fixed to get outa here, Bones?" he asked.

"Don't you worry now," said Skelton. "Everything's fixed. Mickey's goin' to ride down an' tell Andy——"

"I'm kinda dubious he'd be in time." Dakota frowned. "Say, Mick, how-come you didn't go home like we planned?"

"Aw, I wanted to stay an' go with you," whimpered Mickey. "I happened to think that Andy's buckskin would go straight home, so I tied a note on the horn tellin' Andy to look under the saddle."

"My gosh!" groaned Dakota. "An' Pete Barenden was going down to look that hawss over. If he found that note under the saddle he'll— Say, we gotta get outa here—quick!"

Dakota was sure he knew what Barenden would do should he get the note that had been intended for Andy Clausen. That crooked banker would see that the game was up, and he would make quick and desperate efforts to save what he could from the wreck. And Dakota knew that there was much of value to be salvaged.

From the hasty questioning of Skelton and Mickey, Dakota learned that two of the outlaws probably were dying. The other three wounded men would be able to ride.

"We'll take them three down," said Dakota. "We'll have to leave Carpenter and

Skeeter. Yuh s'pose you can ride, Bones?"

Skelton insisted that he could ride. Skeeter said he would not be left behind, but Dakota pointed out that he would be doing more to help in this getaway by remaining here with Carpenter, and seeking an ambush hide-out that covered the yard.

"Yuh see," explained Dakota, "that Barenden and his three bad eggs is apt to be along 'most any time. And they've jest got to be stopped. I'm afraid now that Andy didn't get my note, so he won't be watching that phoney banker. And mebbe Barenden did get it. Yuh 'member what we was talkin', Bones?"

"Aw, I wasn't gettin' no divvy from this bunch." Skelton's features were quite solemn. "Them fellers come in here an' made me cook for 'em. Drove russled stock in my meadows an' fed up my hay. Threated to plant me down there——"

"That's all right," chuckled Dakota, and Skelton grinned sheepishly as the former explained. "When I seen how all you folks got het up over the try we made to rob that bank, I was pretty sure that Barenden was the big boss; but I don't see how Pete worked them three gunmen in."

"Aw, them three works for Pete at his liv'ry stable," said Bones. "A long time ago Pete got 'em app'inted dipities. Andy mebbe wasn't next to 'em for some time, but he must 'a' got wise up here that day. Yeh, Pete Barenden an' that cashier of his'n started this gang.

"Everything was goin' lovely an' they was layin' up scads of money—till Pete got the notion he wanted that Carpenter ranch. Thought he'd be able to grab it easy with Al comin' to him for the ransom money. But you comin' in fizzled it, 'cause Al wouldn't——"

"I know all that," said Dakota impatiently. "Mickey, yuh reckon you could saddle hawsses for us?"

Mickey insisted that he could saddle any horse that had a head to throw a rope over; and Skelton followed the boy down to the pasture to help. Al Carpenter looked at the two battered men beside him.

"Not much I can say to you two," he muttered. "'Cept that anything I got is your'n."

"That's all right, old-timer," said Dakota. "Glad to help. You don't owe us a thing—that is, you don't owe me nuthin'. Skeeter here——"

"Chee!" sniffed the gat artist. "Al an' me fixed it all up whilst youse was poundin' yer ear. He's givin' us a job on his ranch."

"I know that won't go with you, Dakota," put in Carpenter. "But there's a home for you whenever you want one. There are times mebbe——"

"Like now," sighed Dakota. "When I'm all shot and can't even roll me a smoke."

"Jes' that. I'm takin' you home. Annie would skin me if I didn't. An' Mickey can roll your smokes. Say, you think he's old enough to have a gun, an' learn to use it?"

"Is he? Well, I reckon!"

Mickey and Skelton led saddled horses up to the charred hitch rail in front of the ranch house ruins. Then they worked together for some time to cinch Dakota's useless arms across his chest. The left arm was broken just above the elbow; the muscles under the right shoulder had been fearfully torn by Spike's last shot.

"I see you found White Foot," said Dakota, wincing from the pain of that bandaging. "I could ride him if my legs were gone. Now, here's the layout. We'll take the three of that gang that can ride. Bones, you and Mickey and me will go down with 'em. If our luck is perking, we'll connect with Andy before we meet up with Pete Barenden and his three killers."

"You seem dang sure of Andy," sniffed Skelton. "I don't see——"

"I am dead sure of him, but I'd feel easier if I knew for sure he'd got that note I stuck under Red Devil's saddle. That was to tell him to watch Barenden close—in the interest of the depositors. Yeah, that foxy old sheriff has been onto my racket right from the start. That's how-come he horned in and come up here with Barenden that day."

"He had a nerve to do that."

"But he figgered right. Spike didn't dare start anything with Barenden here;

that banker was plumb anxious to keep Andy fooled. Say, Al, you sent that note of Mickey's to Clausen, did yuh?"

"I took it myself," replied Carpenter. "But Andy said he didn't need you tellin' him what to do. He already had his posse strung out along the line."

"I wonder though does Andy know the big joke about that crooked banker?" muttered Dakota. "Well, let's pack up."

It was quite a job getting the wounded prisoners mounted and secured on the horses. Upon Mickey fell the most of this work. Skelton could do little more than to cover the tying operations with a six-gun.

Finally the three wounded outlaws were in their saddles. Dakota managed to mount. Skelton likewise. Mickey came up with Dakota's own guns, and tied them with the canvas warbag behind White Foot's saddle. Then the boy, very important with his responsibility, led the cavalcade down the road through the meadow.

Dakota was more uneasy than he had been since embarking upon this dangerous mission. While he was sure that he would find some of Clausen's possemen at the state line, he was worried for fear he would meet that other party before he effected a junction with the sheriff's men.

To run into Barenden and his gunmen trio now would be disastrous. Dakota himself could not hold a gun. Skelton was nearly as bad off. Mickey was uninjured, but a boy could do nothing in a fight with gunmen. Yet Dakota felt that he had to take this chance to checkmate Barenden, and thus finish the job he had started.

As time passed, however, and the miles of meadows and timbered ridges were left behind, Dakota became more optimistic. Maybe Barenden had not caught Andy's buckskin and discovered the message under the saddle. Maybe this bunch of prisoners and their battered captors would reach the protection of Andy Clausen.

On the ridge where branched the cut-off trail upon which had occurred the battle the day before, Dakota halted for a conference with Bones. By the main road it was nearly a mile to the state line; by the branch trail the line could be reached in three hundred yards.

While Dakota could see little difference in the choice of routes, he surmised that he would be more apt to fall in with some of Clausen's men by keeping to the main road. Still, were Barenden fleeing, he surely would take that cut-off trail.

While they were talking it over the watchful Mickey called attention to a dust-cloud far down the branch trail. Dakota rode out to where he could scan the lower country from the screen of a pine thicket.

Shortly he made out a file of seven animals approaching at a swift pace. He studied them only for a moment, then hastened back to where Skelton and Mickey waited with the prisoners. The boyish gunman's features were drawn and his eyes looked old and tired.

"This is hell! That's Barenden and his killers, driving three packed mules. We could miss 'em by striking down this main road, but—"

"Aw, let him go," sniffed Skelton. "We've got the gang busted."

"The gang don't mean much 'side of this outfit," retorted Dakota. "Less'n we ketch this bunch there'll be no rewards paid on this clean-up—and I was hoping you'd get something to build you a new house, Bones. Gosh, I hate to fall down on this. Son," his troubled eyes searched Mickey's eager face, "they's one long chance, but if it was to fizzle——Well, here's one poor waddie who'd never get another night's sleep."

"Yuh want me to help—some way?" spluttered Mickey. "Don'tcha be afraid for me, Dakota. I'm right with you. I got my gun again. An' didn't yuh hear me shoot last night?"

"I did. But there'd be no shooting in this." Dakota squinted at Skelton, drew a deep breath and nodded. "We'll try it. Bones, take the prisoners on down the main road, and if you see Andy or any of his men you send 'em hellin' acrost to the trail. C'mon, Mickey. We gotta hurry."

Skelton made heated objection to the boy and the wounded Dakota facing those four men, but the young gunman, very stern and determined now, silenced him.

"Get going, Bones. Sooner you send somebody acrost——Let's go, Mickey boy.

We got to get down in them willows acrost the line before that bunch gets out where they'll see us."

Skelton, mumbling dire predictions, herded his prisoners down the road. Dakota led swiftly down the other side of the ridge, swung into the clump of willows and dismounted at a little creek.

"Fast work now, son," he said. "Get my guns and belts offen behind, and a new green shirt outa that sack. Now—these arms."

Dakota sat down beside the creek. Mickey, directed by the wounded man, cut off what remained of Dakota's shirt, removed some of the bulky bandages, and carefully washed all blood from the helpless hands. Then, after much painful effort on the part of both, the new shirt was put on, and Mickey adjusted Dakota's belts.

"Now get that star outa the pocket of that old shirt," muttered Dakota through white lips. "Pin her on—closer to my arm. That's it. Doggone! I'm wobbly. Mebbe you'll have tuh ease me along a little. Leave the hawsses here. We gotta get out by that rock."

With reeling steps Dakota worked to a brush-covered rock beside the trail. For a moment he leaned against the rock, fighting off a sinking dizziness. Just down the trail he could hear the clatter of animals and the mule-driving yells of men.

"My hands now, Mick. Quick! This one on your side. Poke it over a little. Now the other one. Nope, you'll have to get the thumb in the belt. That's good. That gun next you—slide it jest a mite to the front. Now let me look."

Leaning against the rock, he looked down at his hands, resting with thumbs hooked in the belts just above the butts of his guns. The layout appeared quite natural. He tried to move his right hand, the least injured one, but a stabbing pain all up his arm caused a black cloud to sweep before his eyes. Mickey cried out in alarm.

"'Sall right," murmured the wounded man. "I'm set. Now you." He shook off the wave of faintness and grinned white-lipped at the boy. "You're to stay back of that rock. But no shooting. That would kill us both. Just lay back there. If this works I'll call you out. If it don't—and they go for me—you sneak back in the brush and hide."

Mickey, all aglow with admiration for this nervy hero of his, promised to follow instructions, and ducked behind the rock. Dakota edged back as the first of the three pack mules came around the turn below.

The three packed mules, with noses almost touching the ground, labored past Dakota without sighting him. Next, Pete Barenden rode within the waiting man's line of vision. The other three came in sight. Dakota straightened, easing himself away from the supporting rock.

"Wait a minnit!" His tones were low, but they held a note of command that caused the four men to turn their heads rather than to go for guns. "Easy now. I guess you boys know what'll happen if you start with me."

"What the hell you mean?" growled Barenden, flecking his eyes to the men behind him.

"I mean the game's up. Lift 'em—all of you!"

There was no hesitation in obeying that order. It was plain that each of the four sensed the sudden death suggested by that lithe figure standing at ease beside the trail. With thumbs hooked in his belt, grim guns ready to his hands, eyes smiling, lips curved scornfully, Dakota held for these men a most sinister threat.

"A holdup, hey?" sneered Barenden. "You're crazy!"

"Not a holdup," retorted Dakota. "Don't see this little dufunny, do yuh?" He turned a little to give them view of his deputy's badge.

"Uh-huh." Barenden became cooler. "Well, what you pulling us for? About Ben Nelson, I suppose. But I've squared that with Andy. I proved to him that I didn't know a thing about Ben being in with Spike. And"—he grinned—"I didn't see you yesterday—if that's what you're figgering to swear in court. I can prove I was in the bank all day."

"I won't try to prove that you're the boss of the Spike outfit," returned Dakota.

"I've got good evidence that you engineered the kidnaping of that Carpenter kid. I'm arresting you for that."

"Is that all?" Barenden brightened. "You ain't got a thing on me. Com'on, fellers."

"Not so fast! I say you're under arrest. If you doubt it—start something."

Barenden threw a frantic glance at his gunmen, but not one of those three showed inclination to accept Dakota's invitation. They knew the deadly reputation of this young man, and had no desire to see his famous guns in action.

"All right—that's settled," said Dakota. "One at a time now. You man behind first. Get down. While your back's this way, drop your belts in the trail. Don't yuh stall, yuh dirty buzzard!" Dakota's speech sounded like the dull clinking of grounded steel. "That's fine. Back over against that bank. Next!"

In turn the men dismounted, dropped their belts and shuffled to the bank across the trail. Barenden hesitated as he unbuckled his belt, but finally he dropped his single holster and with a sneering air of bravado joined his men.

"You'll get yours for this!" he snarled. "You don't know how strong I am in this country."

"Not near so strong as you was 'fore I come in," drawled Dakota, his keyed-up sense of hearing finding faint sounds down the trail. "I hope I get you to jail before you're depositors get organized. Come on out, Mickey."

Barenden's eyes popped out when the boy came scrambling from back of the rock. Dakota, watching the ex-banker, berated himself for placing the boy in such a dangerous position. While it looked as if he had won, Dakota knew that he was not yet out of the woods.

At Dakota's softly voiced order, Mickey started to gather up the dropped belts. The boy, white-faced and excited, kept his eyes upon the four men. One at a time he picked up the belts and tossed them back of the rock.

"Git on one of them hawsses now," directed Dakota. "And drive the others——"

Dakota tensed. Almost he could read the workings of Barenden's mind. The man had been a little too easy. The late banker had a gun under his arm inside his shirt. His awkward fumbling at a cigar in his vest pocket had warned Dakota.

"Bring that gun out if you want to, Pete," said Dakota softly. "C'mon—I'm waitin'. All right then. Put your hands high up. Mickey, go round back, and take that gun from under Pete's arm."

And Pete Barenden, glowering at the rocklike young gunman, allowed Mickey to take his hidden gun.

A moment later Andy Clausen, leading a file of men, raced up. The sheriff's horse shied from the four men shrinking back from the trail.

"Grab these fellers!" ordered the sheriff. "Here's why Bones was wavin' us over this way." Clausen slid from his horse and ran to Dakota, who was slowly settling, his white face waving from side to side. "I thought you was hurt," he mumbled, failing to sight the expected blood.

"I'm all fine," sighed Dakota. "Arrestin' men always makes me faint-like." He grinned with strained lips at the sheriff. "You can grab Barenden, Andy—on my say-so."

"Don't need your say-so. I was aimin' to jump Pete this mornin', but he left town 'fore breakfast. Who is that bunch with Bones?"

"That's what's left of the Spike gang."

"That's right!" yelped Mickey. "Dakota got 'em all—'cept Skeeter gettin' Spike."

Clausen's surprise at learning that the Spike Sevreen gang had been annihilated was of a different sort than that which convulsed the pallid features of Pete Barenden. The ex-banker looked as if he had been mule-kicked in the stomach. But the sheriff was due for more.

"You'll want them three packs." Dakota jerked his head toward the brush-nibbling mules above. "I reckon you Wardance folks will need that plunder to start up your bank again. But you'll find more'n your depositors' money in there. Yuh see, the reason I couldn't make good with that gang by robbing the bank—was

'cause their loot was all in that safe."

"What?" gasped Clausen. "Cached their loot in Pete's safe? My gosh!"

"Yeah, when they'd rob a bank or sell a bunch of russled stock they'd slip the money to Barenden or Ben Nelson. I guessed some time ago what was in that safe. I sent you a word to watch out Pete didn't rob his own bank, but he got my note——"

"I knowed it!" Andy Clausen looked ready to throw his hat into the air. "Dakota done it! Got the hull gang——"

"Not me," muttered Dakota, and leaned his head against the rock. "Mickey here —an' Skeeter—an' Bones. If you'll send somebody——'

"You fightin' fool!" Clausen grabbed at Dakota's hand, intent on giving it a congratulating shake. "You're the best I——"

Dakota cried a protest, but Clausen was too excited to understand. The overjoyed sheriff yanked the gunman's hand from his belt and pumped it up and down. After one convulsive jump Dakota fell over upon his side.

"Don't do that!" screamed Mickey. "Both his arms are all busted!"

To Pete Barenden came the realization that this nervy gunman had put over the bluff of bluffs. But the crooked banker, understanding now that his escape with the loot of his broken-up gang had been prevented by a boy and a disabled man, was too disgusted to swear.

"Doggone!" Andy Clausen tenderly lifted Dakota's head, chuckled brokenly when the wounded man opened his eyes and grinned. "Couldn't throw a gun! Took them four without airy hands—— Hey!" he yelled at his deputies. "Go git that doc! Send back after a buckboard—half a dozen of 'em. Hussle over an' lay Bones in the shade. A bunch of you go see Al an' that pocket-shooter. Me? I'm helpin' to git Dakota in shape to tell me about that fight. Aw, no! Better you tell me, Mickey."

(The End)

NEVADA IN WAR ON WILD HORSES

"THE mustang must go." This edict has gone forth in the desert counties, where the wild horse long has been the delight of tourists and short story writers, but anathema to farmers and livestock men. Isolated and ineffectual attempts have been made to destroy the desert horse. Now plans are being perfected for a drive of extermination which will be pressed with vigor, despite protests of prospectors and nature lovers.

Droves of animals, led by flashing, keen-witted stallions, raid feeding grounds reserved for cattle and sheep, and attack livestock at water holes, showing marvelous sagacity in eluding traps and hunters. Livestock men assert that bands of coyotes frequently follow the wild horses, completing their work of slaughter. Fifty to a hundred professional hunters are expected to be engaged for the spring drive, and little effort will be made to take any of the vicious buckskins alive.

But as plans are made to rid the intermountain region of mustangs, stock men and farmers are organizing opposition to warfare against the coyotes, warfare which has been carried on since the white man entered this area and which seemed to be based upon a natural enmity between man and beast. At recent largely attended meetings further appropriations for the campaign against the desert wolves have been bitterly fought and the coyote praised as one of the best friends of the desert dwellers.

Defenders of the handsome desert wolf, which has been charged with every crime known to the animal kingdom, now contend that he keeps down the swarming hordes of rabbits, ground squirrels, rats and other pests, and that his extermination would permit smaller pests to become a serious menace. It has been noted that whenever the ranks of the coyote are thinned, dangerous plagues break out among the numerous rodents. These diseases are dangerous to mankind.

The people of these Western deserts are beginning to learn that nature, uninterfered with, maintains a mystic balance of power and that it is dangerous thoughtlessly to interfere with that balance. There is growing a broader spirit of toleration for the animal life of the West, following protection already provided for antelope and deer. But just now, this spirit doesn't extend to include the vicious but picturesque mustang, which man seems to have decided must go.

THE RED TRUMP

By George Rosenberg

Buck had a world of hope tied up in that snug ranch in the Siskiyous.

BUCK GARLAND, owner of the Box G Ranch, kept his eyes resolutely on the rainbow trout on his plate. If he looked up, he knew that Nancy would notice his anxiety; for she always read his face correctly.

When he was tense with dread, it was mighty hard to act naturally and smile at her carefree words. But he forced himself to look at ease, because he shrank back from telling her of the danger that threatened them. It was too grim, too much like an avalanche poised above their heads, threatening at any moment to hurl a hillside down upon them. So he pretended to be calm, and waited. Waited, hoping that he could protect her when the crash came.

He saw her slim hands grasp the flower bowl in the middle of the supper table. The sweet-scented lupin and mountain lilac swayed as she set them to one side. A glowing California poppy fell into her glass. She removed the blossom and placed it among the rest.

"Buck, this poppy's such a vivid orange, I thought for a second it had colored the water!" she remarked, and laughed lightly.

It was a lovely laugh, delicate and clear as the silvery chimes of Santa Rosalia Mission where she was raised. But it startled him. It was so gay, and his own mood was so black and gloomy. For just a second he looked up at his beautiful young wife.

A share of pure Hidalgo blood flowed in Nancy's veins. It showed in her dark eyes, in the proud lift of her firm chin, and in her delicate, patrician features. The soft curves of her throat and face were warm olive in hue, and her cheeks glowed rosily with the flush of youth. In the lustrous coils of her black hair the lamp's yellow gleams sparkled like golden lights. Her slender figure was well

rounded, graceful in her trim costume of gray corduroy.

Nancy's slim fingers were seldom idle. They had woven that linen cloth on the mantel, just under his repeating rifle and her light shotgun. They had mounted that grouse in the corner, and varnished that king salmon over the casting rods behind the door. Those deft fingers had made that soft bed of spruce tips in their little bedroom, and fashioned that rich robe of wildcat skins thrown across it.

Watching her hands, Buck saw them lay down knife and fork.

"Buck," she anxiously questioned, "are you expecting somebody? You seem to be —waiting."

"Why, no! Not exactly," he evaded. "I was just listenin' to the horses in the corral. Sultana's been nickerin', peeved-like."

He smiled reassuringly at her, and turned his head for a quick glance through the open doorway.

The moon had risen. He saw a corner of the barn and corral to the left of the cabin, and he looked out over the open space from his doorstep to the aspens lining Grouse Creek. The whole scene was brilliant with cool light. From the trees a hoot owl queried solemnly, *whoo-cooks, whoo-cooks, whoo-cooks-for-you-allll!* Beyond the creek loomed the high, black wall of the San Miguel Range. The bare crests, shimmering with silver light, towered over ranch and creek. Like a vivid emerald, the encircling mountains held Aspen Valley deep in their bosom.

Nancy was speaking again, and he turned back quickly to face her. She was insistent now, and he had to answer her troubled questions.

"Buck, something's worrying you. I had to call you to supper twice. Ever since Bradley rode by this afternoon, you've been silent, and — and restless. You're uneasy. Why, Buck? All during supper you've seemed to be waiting for something to happen—and *listening!* I heard Bradley mention Steve Scanlon. Is —is his band of rustlers in Aspen Valley? Are you worrying about him?"

He straightened bolt upright in his chair, and for a split-second his aching fear for her showed on his face. But he hid it quickly with a reassuring smile.

She had sensed the danger. Somehow he had put his hand over her eyes so that she would not see the grim peril threatening them. He could not let her suffer the dread that made him sick at heart. All his chivalrous love for her, his pride in his man's strength, demanded that he shield her.

"Why, no!" he exclaimed. "Bradley merely said that this county's offered a two thousand dollar reward for capturing Scanlon. I'm not worrying about anything, honey! Nothing, nothing at all!"

But Bradley *had* mentioned a couple of other things besides that reward. Buck's neighbor had given him two friendly warnings:

Unless he could make his payment on Sultana, his prize mare, he would have to return her to Bradley. Buck was not at all sore about that. He knew Bradley desperately needed the cash he could get for the horse. None the less, losing Sultana would be a hard blow. With her, and a stallion Buck planned on buying later, his herd would be the best in the Siskiyous.

But this matter had passed completely out of his mind at Bradley's second warning. It concerned Steve Scanlon.

That morning, Bradley had said, an Umpqua buck had seen Scanlon and his two men. They were hiding out on Mount Snowdon. Bradley suggested they were after Buck's stock. But Buck knew that they were after more than mere horses. Scanlon had finally come to make good a certain threat!

A year ago both Steve Scanlon and Buck Garland were courting Nancy Rodriguez. She chose Buck. Scanlon had simply faded away from his worthless ranch. Soon afterwards he was recognized as the leader of a small band of rustlers. They were a low, mean outfit, robbing hunters and Indians as well as outlying ranchers, mercilessly burning and killing. To the superstitious Umpquas and Piutes, Scanlon became *cultus tamanous,* bad medicine, not to be harmed by man's bullets.

Then six months ago a friendly squatter

named Webb, from Antelope Canyon, came to Buck with a whispered warning. Webb raised hay which he sold to Scanlon's rustlers. Occasionally he got an earful of their plans. Scanlon, he told Buck, was coming some night to burn the Box G ranch house, to kill Buck, *and take Nancy.*

And now, as Buck smilingly told Nancy that he was worried over nothing at all, he knew that Scanlon was near. He realized, too, that if the rustlers attacked, they would strike within an hour. To reach their hide-out before dawn, they would have to strike early that night.

He seemed calm enough at table. But his nerves were taut, and his muscles tensed as if to spring. And he *was* listening. Listening intently, as sharply alert as a shaggy-eared wolfhound scenting his white-fanged enemy. The night wind breathing softly through the open door brought in many little sounds. A distant coyote yap, a poor-will's mourning from the aspens, the stamping of hoofs in the corral — he heard them all, and studied each one with the keen ear of a man harassed with dread.

He noticed that Nancy was watching him again, her eyes troubled. With an effort, he made himself relax. He smiled at her, and began to talk of their rosy plans for the future. It seemed to him like planning a square dance the night before a funeral. But his voice was calm and soothing, and her uneasiness left her.

"Nancy," he said softly, "I'm not worryin' any, honey. I'm just day-dreamin'. I was seein' you ride a fleet stallion we'd raised. One of that Spanish-Arabian strain we'll develop after we buy Bradley's Monarch. You sat proud as a queen, an' I——"

Suddenly he stopped. His eyes narrowed, and his lips tensed to a thin, hard line. Without moving he listened. Something had scared the horses.

The pine-scented breeze rustled lightly through the window curtains. A chuck-will's-widow whistled in the pepper tree near the well. Then again, plain and unmistakable, from the corral came frightened squeals and clattering of hoofs.

He jumped to his feet, seized the lantern and his holster belt from its peg, and turned to go out.

A gun *cra-a-acked* in the aspens opposite the cabin. The bullet whipped through the open door. It put out his lantern, crashed through dishes on the table, upset ketchup bottle and a can of milk, and flattened against the fireplace.

"Nancy!" He pointed to their little bedroom. "You stay in there, honey. Don't come out 'less'n I call you!"

Then he snatched down his rifle.

SEVERAL hundred yards from the cabin stood the black mass of quaking aspens, willows, and tall cottonwoods lining Grouse Creek. The man who had fired lay securely hidden among them.

Buck crouched beside the door, only his head and shoulders beyond the wall. He watched tensely for the sight of a lurking figure. But he saw no moving shadow, and heard no sound.

It was dark in the cabin, and he knew that he could not be seen. The dense clump of aspens hid his enemies. They were safe, now; though once they left cover, he would have the edge on them. If they tried to cross that moonlit open space between house and trees, he could drop them in their tracks.

Out of the corner of his eyes he caught a slight movement to his left. Swiftly he turned his eyes to the corral. Beside the gate posts, nearly hidden by them, stood two men as quiet as black statues. Moonlight glistened on their rifle barrels. They were waiting for him to take just one step outside!

If they opened that gate, he would lose his stock. His horses would pour out of the corral and drift up the valley. Later these rustlers would haze them off. And he could not leave the cabin to round his animals up! The moment he showed himself in the moonlight, Scanlon's men would finish him.

He snapped rifle to shoulder and pulled trigger.

The two rustlers were somewhat protected by the posts. But at his second shot, one of them yelled and tumbled to the ground. The other flopped down be-

side him. The wounded man was not out of it yet, for both started firing away at the cabin.

A bullet struck the log wall a scant three inches from his nose. A wood splinter drew blood from his cheek. A little later, he felt a sharp stab of pain in his wrist.

He emptied his magazine, shooting low for fear of killing his own horses. Then he stopped to reload.

Some seconds later he glanced up again. The rustlers were squirming through the corral bars. They lit running, though one wobbled crazily with a lame leg. Like scared jackrabbits they raced to the aspens. He could have knocked over at least one of them. But he did not have the heart to shoot a running man in the back.

He crouched low against the door jamb, so that he could watch with little chance of being hit. Three rifles flashed away at the cabin now. Bullet after bullet thudded into the heavy logs, snarled through the open door, and crashed dishes in the pantry.

But finally the shooting thinned out, and then stopped. The echoes died away, and the night became quiet again. Even the nervous horses calmed down.

Buck watched for the sight of a man's body. But the rustlers were hidden in the black shadows of the trees. He listened intently for a sound, a low word or rustling in the underbrush, that would tell him where they were lying. But he heard nothing, only the wind trembling softly through the aspens.

Then he realized that he had won. The brilliant moonlight was of more help than a sheriff's posse. Not even a gopher could stir near cabin or corral without his seeing it. He had Scanlon and his men tied to cover. They knew better than to leave that dark belt of trees. He could pick them off one by one, just as easily as they could drop him if he left his cabin.

For this one night, he had won! Nancy was safe. Even his horses were safe. As long as he had cartridges left, Scanlon could not touch them. A deep, tense sigh of relief eased through his lips.

Then he heard Nancy come out of the bedroom.

"Buck! Oh, Buck!"

He felt her hand on his arm, and her warm breath against his cheek as she whispered. Her voice held no fear, only anxiety for him.

"I'm all right, honey!" he assured her. "Only my wrist——"

She caught her breath with a sharp gasp, and her hands tightened on his arm.

"Buck, let me dress it! Quick, dear!"

He hesitated, but she was so keenly worried that he gave in.

"All right, honey. Light that lantern in the bedroom where it won't show outside. I'll shoot a couple of times to let these hombres know I'm watchin' close, an' come back for just a second."

She left, and a moment later he heard her striking a match.

He fired twice into the aspens. But he saw nothing, and heard nothing in response. Scanlon and his men were lying low.

He hurried back to the bedroom.

Nancy was pale, and her dark eyes were wide with concern. He drew her close.

"We're safe, pardner! These rustlers are licked. Licked complete!—— What're you doin' with that automatic, honey?"

"Why," she answered slowly, "I thought I might help."

He kissed her, and took the weapon from her pocket.

"Fix my hand up quick, Nancy. Then you stay in here where you'll be safe. I'm goin' to sit by the door an' watch these coyotes."

He stared down at his hand as she cleaned the wound. Her fingers were deft, and soft as satin.

Outwardly, he seemed calm enough. Because of Nancy he hid his white-hot rage against Scanlon. The rustler, for more than half a year, had cast the only shadow over his and Nancy's happiness.

Vivid memories of a thousand joyful moments crowded his mind. Nancy and he were partners. They hunted the piney forests of the San Miguels together, fished the sparkling trout streams, galloped side by side over the sage and bunch-grass of Aspen Valley. Her slim beauty, the soft tones of her voice, the touch of her smooth

fingers, all these gave him the keenest pleasure he had ever known.

Webb's warning had brought him torturing uneasiness and dread. The constant threat of trouble from Scanlon had been like an icy wind sweeping down into the valley from the glaciered crests of Mount Snowden. He had protected her from its sting. But his fear for her had been as insistent as a sidewinder's continued warning buzz. It dulled the keen edge of his happiness. Always it lay at the back of his mind. He would waken at night, fists clenched, face drawn into a fighting mask.

Now, he realized, he had beaten Scanlon for this one time. But not every night would be moonlight. He would not always be near, with loaded gun and his two fists, to protect Nancy. He simply *had* to quash Scanlon once and for all. Not to do so was to live in the path of an avalanche.

Slowly a plan took rough shape in his mind. Carrying it out was as dangerous as jumping into a dark pit of rattlers, unarmed, blindfolded, hands tied behind his back. But if the plan worked, Nancy would be safe. And never again would he have to keep a gun loaded for Scanlon!

"Nancy," he slowly declared, "I'm goin' to surrender to these rustlers."

She looked up at him, amazed. Then a mischievous sparkle lighted up her eyes and she began to laugh at this joke.

Her disbelief hurt, but he could not blame her for laughing. What he intended doing *was* unbelievable. Prospect of failure was so great it made him gasp to think of it. And if he lost out, Nancy would be at the mercy of those wolves outside. But now that he saw a single, incredibly thin chance to end their constant danger, he had to take it.

His face did not relax as he looked down at her. Set and stern he returned her gaze. Suddenly she realized that he spoke in dead earnest. Her eyes darkened, and she looked at him in fear and astonishment.

"Surrender!" she echoed, her voice a tense whisper. "You mean—give yourself up to them?"

"Yes. I'm goin' out, hands raised, an' give myself up."

Her face grew deadly white.

"But—but what in the world for, Buck? —— You've got them beaten! We're safe. They can't touch us. Why, Buck? *Why?*"

"Nancy," he slowly replied, "you haven't known it, but this danger's been hanging over us for half a year. Tonight, one way or the other, this trouble's goin' to be settled for good and all!"

A FEW minutes later, Buck pushed his cabin door open and stepped outside. With his left hand he held the lantern up so that the rustlers could see he carried no rifle. His right arm was swathed in a bandage splotched with red. For a moment he stood still, unsteadily swaying. Then he raised both arms high, and called out huskily:

"Hullo, you hombres! I'm givin' up—surrenderin'!"

Vaguely he heard amazed swearing.

"All right, bucko!" came a sneering reply. "Come on over. Keep your paws up!"

He walked slowly across that moonlit space to the aspens. Not another word did he hear, or notice a single moving shadow.

Their silence was ominous. In this clear light they could not miss him with a bullet. And they were not above waiting till he got real close before emptying their rifles into him!

Finally a harsh command was snapped at him when he was a few yards from the trees.

"Stop! Set that lantern on the ground. Unbuckle your holster belt an' let your six-gun drop. Then raise your mitts high!"

He obeyed. His heavy Colt clattered against a rock.

"That's plumb sensible!" The hidden speaker grimly chuckled.

Three men stepped out of the shadows and came towards him. Two of them carried rifles. The burly leader had a six-gun in his hand, and Buck recognized him as Steve Scanlon.

He had met Scanlon only three or four times. But there was no mistaking those

huge shoulders and arms like gnarled tree trunks, that shaggy head with its massive jaw, that livid scar that ran from forehead down to bulging chin.

"Wal!" Scanlon jeered. "You yaller, crawfishin' Siwash! You were safe as a porcypine in a holler tree, an' you give up like a possum. Gettin' your arm plugged must've jolted the prop out of your backbone!"

Buck ignored the sneer.

"Scanlon," he demanded evenly, "what's the idea of shootin' up my place?"

"Idea a-plenty!" Scanlon growled, and turned to his men.

"You two go haze them critters out that gate. I'm tendin' personal to this lame maverick an' that filly in the cabin!"

"Hold on!" Buck cut in, his voice stinging sharp. "I've surrendered to you, an' you got me. But I'm warnin' you to leave my stock alone!—— If you'll high-tail it from here peaceful, I'll give you two hundred dollars."

All three rustlers crowded close, drawn like buzzards to a carcass by the smell of money. Scanlon, his yellowish eyes smoldering, thrust his huge face close to Buck's.

"We're takin' more than *that!*" he snarled.

Buck returned his gaze steadily, so steadily that Scanlon's eyes shifted. He stared at Buck's wounded arm. His lips curled in a wolfish grin, baring long, yellow teeth.

The bandages were moist, and dripped to the ground with a slow, regular *plop, plop, plop*. A tiny pool was formed at Buck's feet, dark red in color. The dull lantern light slanted heavily off its spreading surface.

"Garland," Scanlon rasped, "if you'd stayed in that cabin, you'd been safe. We couldn't reach you. Now, we've got you. An' *you can't fight back!*"

He paused dramatically to let his words sink in. Moving still closer to Buck, he continued in a low voice, heavy with rage:

"I've been waitin' a year for this chance! I'm goin' to burn your cabin. I'm stealin' your horses. I'm goin' to kill you! I'm goin' to take Nancy! When I get through with her, even if you was still alive, you wouldn't want her—— An' I'm startin' *now,* with you!"

Buck had but a second to brace himself. Innocently, as though to ward off a blow, he drew his right arm down.

Scanlon levelled his six-gun. As its trigger eared back, Buck's bandaged hand pointed at him and spurted fire. Scanlon's gun was crashed from his fingers by a bullet. He jumped back, gasping with surprise.

Lightning fast, Buck's right hand pointed toward the second rustler, and flashed again. The man spun, and tumbled to the ground.

The third horse thief tried to dodge aside and bring his gun up. His rifle cracked. But Buck sprang to one side, and the slug spatted into a tree, as he returned fire and stretched the man lifeless beside his pardner.

Just in time Buck whirled to meet Scanlon. The leader sprang at him, eyes blazing, oaths boiling from his lips. A long knife in his fingers scintillated in the moonlight.

Buck's left hand shot out and gripped Scanlon's wrist. Back and forth they tugged, struggling like two maddened bull moose with locked horns. Their breath came in whistling stabs. The muscles of their necks stood out rigid as columns. Drops of sweat streaked their faces and glistened in the lantern light.

Buck tripped over a root. Together they fell heavily to the ground. The knife struck a rock and was wrenched from Scanlon's fingers.

Over and over they rolled, pounding at each other's faces. Buck tried to protect himself with his bandaged arm. Finally with his left hand he clutched Scanlon's throat. Desperately he began to squeeze.

Scanlon's huge fists beat cruelly at his face and chest. They tore at his ribs, and hammered at his stomach, so that he gasped and writhed with pain. But he did not lose his hold on Scanlon's throat. His life depended on it, for the automatic in his bandaged hand was jammed. Tighter and tighter he clenched his fingers.

For a moment both stiffened their

bodies and lay still. Scanlon twisted back a little from Buck. Then suddenly, with force enough to jar a house, he rammed his knee into Buck's stomach. Buck nearly fainted with agony. His hold on the rustler's throat loosened. Scanlon began to struggle furiously again, jamming Buck against sharp rocks and tree trunks.

Suddenly Buck's fingers were torn away. Scanlon rolled clear. He lunged to his knees, a heavy rock grasped tight in his fist.

Buck saw it. With the last of his strength, he lurched close. Even as Scanlon's hand drew back, Buck raised his bandaged arm and crashed it against the rustler's temple.

Then the rock struck his head, and Buck sank into a black gulf.

WHEN he came to, he was lying on the ground, his head in Nancy's lap. A few yards away, Scanlon lay still unconscious. When Buck moved, Nancy flung her arms about his neck in a burst of passionate tenderness.

"Buck"—she choked "I was afraid that you—you were——"

"Don't, honey," he said soothingly. "I'm all right—Nancy, pardner, don't you see it all yet? Scanlon's goin' where he won't ever bother us again! We'll get that two thousand dollar reward. We'll keep Sultana, and buy Monarch!"

"I'm—I'm so glad, dear!" she murmured breathlessly.

Shakily he got to his feet. The color flamed back into her pale cheeks as he took her into his arms.

"Nancy," he said a few minutes later, "I'd better hog-tie Scanlon."

As he tightened a lariat about him, Scanlon moved. By the time Buck had finished, the rustler was fully conscious.

"Say," he demanded thickly, "what was the big idea of surrendering, anyhow?"

"You said it yourself, when I first came out," Buck reminded him evenly. "While I was inside my cabin, you couldn't reach me. Neither could I reach you. If I hadn't given up to you, I couldn't have captured you."

Scanlon, his grimy face still puzzled, let that sink in a while.

"How about that wound, that blood?"

"Oh, that wound isn't much. Just a scratch," Buck patiently explained. "Nor that isn't blood, neither. That's ketchup."

ROB HOME BANKS AND KILL MARSHAL

PAYING a return visit to his home town, Matthew Kimes, notorious outlaw, and his gang robbed two banks at Beggs, Okla., of nearly $18,000 and shot their way out, leaving the town marshal dead, and a woman, who apparently frustrated the robbery of a third bank, probably mortally wounded.

Officials of both looted banks said the leader of the gunmen undoubtedly was Kimes, elusive young desperado, whose sensational exploits have been a modern parallel to the career of Jesse James and Al Jennings.

Dashing into the little town in the morning in three motor cars, the nine members of the gang divided into groups and drove up to the three banks. Two of the banks, the Farmers' National and the First National, were invaded immediately.

Mrs. Charles Campbell, a shopper, left her children in an automobile and ran into a pool hall crying an alarm. M. C. McAnnally, Marshal, went immediately to the Farmers' National Bank, arriving just as the robbers emerged.

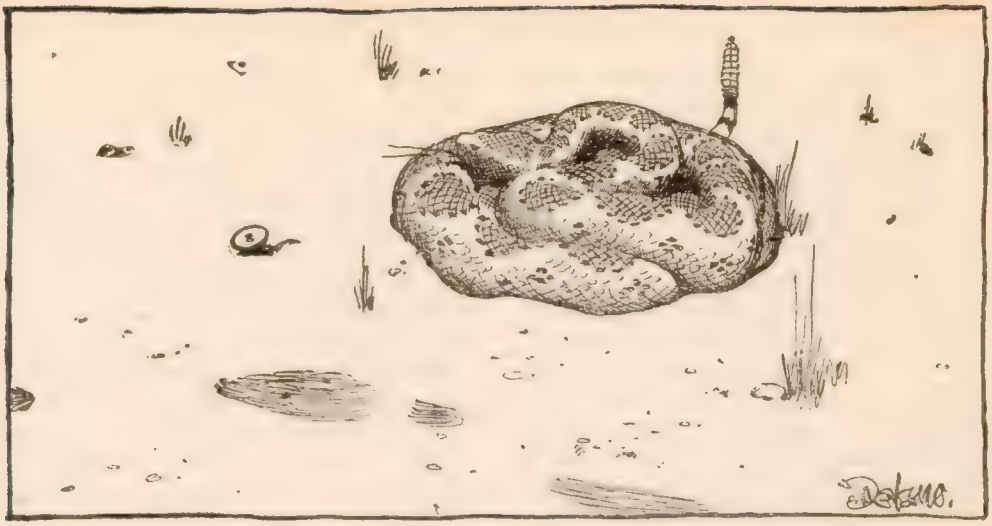
McAnnally opened fire on the racing figures, and a hail of bullets answered him, one piercing his breast and killing him instantly. Mrs. Campbell was struck in the head by a bullet.

The three robbers, who had parked their car in front of the American State Bank, fled when the shooting started, without attempting to rob the institution.

Attracted by the shots, townspeople poured into the street. The men hastily gathered up all available firearms, loaded them into motor cars and took up pursuit. Within an hour one of the robber cars had been found abandoned eight miles west of Beggs, near the ranch on which Kimes spent his boyhood.

Kimes led the band that robbed the Farmers' National Bank of Beggs of $20,000 a year ago. He was captured in the Ozark Mountains of Western Arkansas soon afterward, following a running fight with officers in which Perry Chuculate, Indian Deputy Sheriff of Sequoiah County, Okla., was killed.

Kimes and his brother, George, were convicted of manslaughter in Chuculate's death. George was sent to the penitentiary for twenty-five years, and Matthew was rescued by his cohorts from the Sequoiah County Jail in a daring raid.



THE MAN IN SIDEWINDER CANYON

By Albert William Stone

Going over a mile of ground in Sidewinder Canyon is like tramping fifty in any place you can name off-hand.

"SAPPY" O'NEILL had ridden some nine miles into Sidewinder Canyon, which splits the fearsome Redondo Desert into two stretches of white-hot hell, when his tough, little buckskin pony decided to call it a day. The buckskin was like most of its kind, in that it was too smart to be imposed upon by any bewhiskered old maverick, no matter how accurately he could squirt tobacco juice between its indignant ears.

When a buckskin quits, it *quits.* There's no reasoning with it. Sappy dug his spurs in as far as they would go, cussing something scandalous. But the little horse merely shrugged its shoulders, in a manner of speaking, and moved not an inch.

Presently Sappy lifted one leg stiffly over the saddle horn, and eased himself to the ground. At this point in the Sidewinder Canyon the ground was mostly sharp pointed igneous rock, sprinkled between with sand so white and fine it resembled flour.

"Yuh stubborn, four-flushin' hunk o' polecat bait!" he remarked succinctly, giving the beast a hearty kick in its clearly defined ribs. "Yuh bow-legged, thick-headed, ongrateful excuse fer hoss! Jest because it's a mite hotter'n what yo're used to' yuh lay down on me. That's what yo're doin'—layin' plumb down on me! Can't call it nothin' else."

Sappy was not in the habit of talking aloud to such four-footed companions as he happened to own; but this was a special occasion. The sun was pouring down in the canyon like something out of a blast furnace. The buckskin's hide was thick, and doubtless the heat was scarcely more than a mere inconvenience to it; nevertheless it refused to budge an inch. Whoever said that a mule is the stubbornest animal alive never had the misfortune to have to do with a buckskin pony.

Sappy shouted and kicked until he was hoarse and completely out of breath. Then, breathing hard, he sat down in the shelter of a rock and glared helplessly. The buckskin, promptly resenting the glare, snorted with pseudo-indignation and sprang into the air like a jackrabbit. The next instant it was galloping up the trail at extraordinary speed, considering the heat. In something less than half a minute it had disappeared around a bend, flirting its stringy tail in triumph.

Sappy stared after the flying animal, his mouth open, his eyes popping.

The disaster was too complete for speech. Nine miles and a half isn't so vast a distance as the crow flies, especially in a country where a crow may fly in decent comfort; but in Sidewinder Canyon, a good thousand feet below the floor of the hottest desert in all North America, it becomes an acute problem, to say the least. To a man on foot, without shelter of any kind, it may be more than that.

The hoofbeats of the departing horse died away in a surprisingly short time, due to the super-heated air. Sappy climbed a mass of bowlders to where the river trickled between the rocks and over gravel that had been there when the Silurian Sea still covered the earth, and stooped down to get a drink. The water was almost hot to his tongue. His waterbag, cunningly contrived to cool the contents by evaporation through its pores, was dangling at the saddle of the departed buckskin.

"Whew!" grunted the traveler, wiping his grizzled mouth with the back of his hand. "That's enough tuh bile a feller's insides out."

He sat down on the shady side of a rock to think. His watch told him it was well past noon. The buckskin had carried off his grub, along with everything else. Sappy was hungry. The drink of the heated water had not quenched his thirst to speak of. And his destination was still, according to information given him back at the town of Spotted Tail, thirty or more miles down the valley.

"I kin hoof it back, I reckon," he muttered. "Or I kin keep right on down this hell hole until I come out somewhere. Trouble is, I might git plumb tuckered out 'fore I git thar. An' then ag'in, I might not."

An exceedingly tough personage was Sappy O'Neill. He had served a stern apprenticeship as a cowboy, at a period when weaklings had no place in the scheme of things. He knew how to handle a gun, too. If he hadn't possessed this vital knowledge, "Onion Head" McKay would have lost his life as well as his scalp, that time the Comanches invaded Discovery Gulch on their war ponies. Discovery Gulch, be it known, opened out upon the famed Discovery Cattle Range, a fact which the Indians seemed to know quite well. And Sappy O'Neill shot seven of them off their horses before he won his way to Onion Head's side, just as a Comanche brave, with a blood curdling yell, ripped his partner's hair from his head, leaped to his pony's back and galloped swiftly away. Sappy killed three more Indians after that, standing over his partner's body with his Winchester at his shoulder.

Onion Head got well, miraculously, and ever after bore the sobriquet by which he was known all over the range. Sappy's thoughts went back as he crouched in the shadow of the hot rock. They were bitter thoughts. They seemed to be perfectly apropos under the circumstances.

"Here I am," Sappy wailed, "a million miles from nowheres, stranded in th' hottest place outside o' Hades. No hoss, no grub, no water fit to drink. And all on account of a low down human skunk that used to call hisself my pardner, blast his stinkin' hide!"

At thought of Onion Head McKay, probably at this moment sitting on the porch of his ranch house and fanning himself against the heat, Sappy swore fervently. Then he got to his feet, shook himself, squinted at the brassy sky and shook his fist in the direction taken by the truant buckskin. He drew his gun out of its holster, twirled the cylinder with a stubby thumb, ran his finger along the barrel and saw to it that the hammer rested securely on the safety pin. Then he replaced it in the holster.

"I ain't goin' back," he said aloud, facing grimly toward the down trail. "I'm goin' to keep right on 'til I meet up with Onion Head; that's what I'm goin' to do. He can't git away from me this time. Can't no desert keep me from gittin' even with Onion Head, damn his skin."

And taking a hitch in his pants, easing his ammunition belt around to a more comfortable position, Sappy started to hobble resolutely forward, headed into the recesses of the weirdest earth gash within four thousand miles.

A mile is a mile, according to the science of linear measurement. But in Sidewinder Canyon it becomes infinitely more, if you get what I mean. Especially if you are on foot, hobbling along on high-heeled boots, with the galling weight of two ammunition belts sawing endlessly at your back and abdomen, and a heavy forty-four bumping your right hip every step of the way.

It became hotter, if anything. The rocks and flourlike sand fairly burned through the thick soles of the traveler's boots, scorching his leathery feet like fire. He drank of the water of the trickling "river" frequently, getting about the same satisfaction as a shipwrecked sailor would get from imbibing salt water. Despite the wetting, his tongue had begun to swell before he had tramped three miles. His empty stomach demanded food with increasing insistence.

On each side the walls of the canyon rose in rocky tiers. Sappy had once visited a penitentiary and seen the tiers of steel cells rising from the floor to the roof; these walls reminded him of the experience. Ahead of him the gorge wound into the bowels of the earth like some giant prehistoric reptile crawling toward its lair. The fearful heat danced before him in waves, giving him the queer feeling of floating between earth and sky.

There was life all about him, but it was the furtive, often poisonous life of the desert. More than once he saw sidewinder rattlesnakes crawling across the trail before him, their ugly little horns curving up from their diamond-shaped heads, their sandy-colored bodies writhing sinuously through the sand and between the rocks. He saw the tracks of Gila monsters. Drab lizards, some of them surprisingly large, darted over the rocks with the incredible speed of their kind. Several times his extended nostrils caught the odor that told of hydrophobia skunks somewhere in the vicinity, and each time he paused with his hand on the butt of his gun, watching for traces of the animals. The bite of a hydrophobia skunk, he knew, was to be dreaded almost above that of a rattlesnake.

Once a road runner jumped out from a rock at the side of the trail and ran squawking along the latter, its scanty wings outspread to aid in its flight. Sappy knew what a road runner was, and his forty-four leaped from the holster and blazed away at the feathered fugitive. But the road runner was already out of range, and took care not to come within it any more. Sappy shoved the gun back into its receptacle and cursed impotently. The bird would have supplied him with food, after a fashion.

There were other birds around, he was to discover. The canyon was widening at the top as it narrowed at the bottom, exposing more and more of the brassy sky. The sun was still pouring into the gash. Sappy shook his fist at the buzzards he could see wheeling about in huge, lazy circles far above him.

"Stick around as long as yuh please!" he invited the horrid creatures with a thick cackle. It does not take long for the desert to take toll of a man's reasoning powers. "Yuh can't scare me none. You an' me has got th' same kind o' business anyhow, I reckon."

He exposed his yellowed teeth in a horrible grin as he shouted, or rather croaked, the defiance. The buzzards were near enough so that he could discern the red flesh hanging from the sides of their beaks, and catch the flash of the sun's rays on their bald heads. The latter fascinated him.

"Onion heads!" he scoffed, pausing in the trail and teetering on his boot heels as he stared upward, his face gathering a thousand wrinkles at the outer corners of his eyes. "Onion heads! Stick around, an' I'll take yuh to where there's another one. Stick around——"

He stumbled on down the trail, the belts galling him, the heavy gun bumping against his right hip, his tongue getting more and more furry despite his frequent pauses to quaff of the hot water of the river.

"Onion heads," he muttered over and over.

When the darkness came at last it brought with it the almost instantaneous

chill that only the desert knows. Throughout the night Sappy crouched against an ancient bowlder, nursing its warmth as long as it lasted, ears cocked for the sounds of the furtive, poisonous life around him. Occasionally he fell into something that was half doze, half coma. He kept his gnarled hand curled around the butt of his gun, ready to blaze away at the first sound of menace. His thirst had subsided somewhat with the coming of the night's chill, but his stomach was gnawing frightfully.

The trickle of the little river kept him awake at first, but later acted as a soporific to his senses. Overhead the stars winked brilliantly in a blue-black sky of velvety softness. He heard the occasional snort of a mule deer, picking its furtive way down to the river to drink. Twice that day he had caught glimpses of the graceful little animals as they darted along rocky shelves of the canyon's sides. Why, he wondered, should a deer come to this God-forsaken hell-hole of creation?

He fell into a troubled half-sleep and dreamed that he was back on the old ranch, riding herd on the vast herds of cattle in company with dozens of other young, reckless cowpunchers. McKay, his partner, was among them. He had not yet lost his scalp, and nobody called him "Onion Head" yet. Sappy chuckled happily in his sleep. Onion Head! A hell of a name to give a——

In this dreamlike way their prospecting experience passed and repassed through his mind. The vast cattle herds faded out of sight. Sappy O'Neill and Onion Head McKay were on the steep slope of a mountain, grubbing into the rocky soil for gold. They were older now; Sappy's hair was thinner, and gray, his face wrinkled. Onion Head was stooped.

"When we make our strike," Onion Head was saying, pausing in his work to wipe the sweat from his seamed forehead, "I aim to buy me a cattle ranch an' settle down; savvy? Doggone this hard work, I say. What I crave is a good hoss between my laigs, an' plenty of free range to ride over."

That was Onion Head all over. No hand for hard work. Onion Head liked his ease. Sprawled across his bunk, with a cigarette between his laughing lips and his bald head shining in the rays of the lamp, he was the picture of contentment. A great hand for sprawling, and for eating grub, was Onion Head McKay.

"This is a dawg's life," he was saying as he restored his bandanna to the hip pocket of his corduroys. "Me, I aim to invest in a good cattle ranch, with plenty o' free range an' water——"

But Sappy had other ideas. He voiced them frequently as the partners lay on their blankets after eating their supper on the ledge where they maintained their camp, looking up at the stars.

"I'll take mine in city livin'," he said. "I've lived a tough life, Onion Head."

"You an' me both," Onion Head nodded, puffing at his cigarette.

"So there won't be no more ranch life in mine. What I aim to do is take a trip, ridin' in style; savvy? I'll go to New York, an' maybe to Europe. I aim to see a few crowned heads 'fore I cash in my chips. What's th' use o' havin' money if you don't spend it?"

"That's what I say," retorted Onion Head. "A good ranch, with two or three thousand head of good stock, plenty o' free range an' water——"

"You make me sick!" Sappy O'Neill broke in, after half an hour or so of this kind of rhapsodizing on the part of Onion Head.

"So do you," Onion Head would retort good naturedly. "Shut up. I'm goin' to sleep."

Onion Head was a plumb fool, to speak plainly. Always talking about sitting on his own front porch, with his carcass in one chair and his feet in another, fanning himself and gazing over his broad acres. Plenty of free range and good water! As if that was all there was in life!

Sappy O'Neill stirred impatiently. Was he dreaming? Or merely thinking? Onion Head might be a fool, but that was no reason for this feeling of moody rage that was causing Sappy to dig his nails into the palms of his hands and mutter fearful oaths into the hot air. What——

Ah—now he remembered! They made their strike, to be sure. Gold. A big pocket of it. They dug it out with frantic strokes of their short picks, pausing now and then to examine the ore through their magnifying glasses. Gold! Rock flecked with the yellow particles! Ore incredibly heavy with it.

They worked against the approach of winter, when digging at the grass roots would be out of the question.

"You take what we've got to town," Sappy O'Neill suggested to his partner. "I'll stick here an' be gettin' out another load 'fore snow flies. We ain't got but th' one burro, an' if we wait too long we can't make it through th' gulch."

"Better come along with me," Onion Head said, squinting at the sky. But Sappy shook his head.

"You ship it to th' smelter. There's more gold here, an' I'll be diggin' it out."

"May not be much left," warned Onion Head, taking off his hat and running his hand over his shining pate. "It's jest a pocket."

"There's more in it," insisted Sappy stubbornly. "I'll be diggin' it out."

And Onion Head loaded the burro with what they had and lit out down the gulch. The second day after he had gone Sappy knew he had been right. The "pocket" —which was not a pocket at all, but a vein—pinched out. No use waiting around any longer. So Sappy loaded himself with the picks and other paraphernalia and hoofed it down the rugged gulch in the trail of the loaded burro.

He arrived in town after a three days' tramp and began looking around for his partner. But Onion Head, it appeared, had gone. Back to Discovery Gulch, perhaps? But that was not possible. There was no way he could have got back that way without encountering Sappy.

He trailed Onion Head to the town where the smelter was located, and there learned the horrible truth. Onion Head, his partner of decades, had drawn the money for the gold and left for parts unknown! Cleaned him out, in other words. Disappeared, taking all the money with him. The dirty, low down skunk!

Sappy O'Neill muttered mouthings into the grizzle under his lower lip. His lips fell away from his yellowed teeth, exposing the red gums. His slouch hat fell from his head, and presently his head was burning with the force of some fearful heat that seared it. A slithering noise caressed his ears with a queerly sinister effect. He uttered a curse, stirred and started up just in time to feel a sharp sting on his wrist and see a sandy colored form writhe away, performing a series of twisting, spiral-like revolutions in its retreat. Beady, lidless eyes glittered into his, and a slimy black tongue was shooting forth eratically from an ugly slit across the point of the wedge-shaped head of the sidewinder. Twin horns curved upward from the flat skull.

With another oath the bitten man jerked out his forty-four, brought it to a careful focus upon the writhing form and pulled the trigger. As if snapped off with a blacksnake the three-cornered head disappeared, and the writhing body thrashed about in the throes of decapitation. Drops of dark blood flew in a thin shower, spattering the rock at Sappy's feet. He came upright and, in a frenzy, emptied his gun at the thrashing thing. One of the bullets ricochetted against a rock and whizzed off toward the opposite side of the canyon.

The tail of the reptile was still quivering as the man stepped forward and ground it under his heel. The snake was dead; but through Sappy's veins the poisoned blood was beginning to accelerate the beating of his heart until his eardrums pounded. The sun, he discovered, was pouring into the canon from the east, and the ground underfoot was already searing hot to the touch. The sidewinder had evidently crept close to him while he slept, striking with the speed of a rifle bullet when he stirred.

He stared at his wrist stupidly. Two spots of blood, like pin pricks, gleamed there. Hesitating only a moment, he clapped his mouth over the place and began drawing in, spitting out the blood as rapidly as his mouth filled up.

Presently he opend his jack knife and slashed across the little incisions two ways,

making a bloody cross. The blood flowed more freely now. But the power of the sun was such that he began to feel dizzy in spite of his precaution. Was he, after all, doomed to die in this terrible canyon —and from the bite of a rattlesnake?

He raised his arms upward in a sudden frenzy.

"Not 'til I've killed Onion Head!" he shouted aloud. "He done me dirt! Not 'til I——"

He began to stumble forward in a half-crazy, wobbling run, sucking alternately at the bitten wrist and waving his arms over his uncovered head as he ran. Lizards darted out of his way. A Gila monster hissed venomously from under a ledge of rock as he passed. The spines of a cholla clawed at his boots, and the dust from the flourlike sand rose in a ragged cloud. Overhead the lazy, red-eyed vultures were stirred into a quickening of their indolent wheeling about, watching the stumbling thing on the floor of the valley with optics that had no visible lids.

The big birds spiraled slowly but surely downward as they followed the erratic course of the crazed man below.

A BALD-HEADED man of sixty or so sat on the wide porch of the sprawling ranch house, fanning himself.

The ranch house was of adobe, with walls two feet thick and roof composed of adobe smeared over timbers laid close together. A good-sized bunkhouse stood some thirty yards to the left. A plentitude of other buildings, flanked by commodious corrals, spread out to the rear fanwise.

Noises from one of the corrals indicated that certain activities were in progress. Hearty profanity was not the least of it. The swish of flying rope, the thud of frantic hoofs, the thwack of violently precipitated bodies helped to swell the medly. Groans and snorts rose on the morning air.

"Set on his head, doggone him!"

"How kin I set on his head 'fore he's down?"

"Well, snub him down, then!"

"Rope him 'round them front laigs!"

"Front laigs, hell! He ain't got any!"

Four sweating cowboys, their hats lying on the ground and their abundant hair touseled, strode valiantly to conquer the two-year-old stallion they had just hazed in from the range. The animal's red nostrils were widely distended, its eyeballs glaring as it fought their united efforts to get it down. Two ropes were already looped about its muscular neck and a third was snarling overhead. It galloped about the corral like an ancient chariot steed, kicking and snorting.

"Rope his laigs, I tell yuh!"

The bald-headed man on the porch was paying no attention to the horse breaking. His clear brown eyes were fixed on a point at the other end of the ranch, where the rocky foothills of the Redondo Range formed a sort of a funnel leading into the heart of the range. Despite his age they were incredibly keen eyes, made so by long years of practice upon wider ranges than this.

Presently he rose and entered the wide door of the house, emerging a moment later with a pair of binoculars of old-fashioned pattern. He swung them to his eyes and gazed fixedly toward the canyon mouth in the distance. Suddenly he swore.

"Bill!"

His stentorian voice cut through the welter of sounds incidental to the horse breaking, like the boom of a cannon. One of the cowboys promptly climbed through the corral gate, dragging his uncoiled rope after him, and approached the porch with an inquiring expression on his bronzed face. The bald-headed man handed him the binoculars.

"Take a look at th' mouth of th' Sidewinder," he directed.

Bill looked. Then he lowered the glasses.

"Looks like a man," he reported. "Locoed, or somethin'. Runnin' in circles——"

He raised the binoculars again.

"He's down!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Now he's gittin' up—no, he's down!"

"Some poor galoot that thought he could

make th' old Sidewinder on foot—or else he's lost his hoss," opined the bald-headed man. "Every so often some wise gazabo has tuh try th' short cut, looks like. Better grab a canteen o' water an' ride over there, Bill."

In two minutes Bill had roped a horse, saddled and bridled it and was off toward the mouth of the Sidewinder. The wanderer perceived through the glasses was still down, he noted as he rode closer. The scant, hard vegetation of the desert gave way with almost magic suddenness as the canyon's mouth widened into the broad meadows of the Double Bar O Ranch, the property of the bald-headed man on the porch of the ranch house.

Bill's horse galloped through the grass almost to its knees, and the trickle of the Sidewinder River became a tumbling, sparkling stream that fairly laughed its way, like Tennyson's brook, down the ever-widening spaces between the distant hills. The bald-headed man's big herds of cattle grazed in groups. That it was a highly prosperous ranch was evident.

The rider came upon the fallen one lying at the very edge of the lush grass. Sappy O'Neill's grizzled countenance was turned up to the sky, his body pathetically small as it huddled on the ground. Even in unconsciousness his lips were still clamped over his wrist.

The cowboy's experienced glance took in the significance of the swollen wrist and arm the moment he saw them. He dismounted with a lithe spring and swung the canteen forward.

"Here you are, old-timer," he said briskly, dashing some of the water into Sappy's face.

"Easy, now. I'm holdin' yuh."

The exhausted man regained consciousness by degrees, rejuvenated by the life-giving fluid. Presently he struggled to a sitting position, supported by the cowboy's muscular arm, and drank from the canteen in eager gulps. The water was indescribably cool and satisfying to his swollen tongue and throat.

"That's enough fer now," Bill ruled after several gulps. "More after a while. Reckon you've been swillin' that water in th' canyon, ain't yuh? Not much satisfaction in it. How come yuh come that way, anyhow?"

He had taken sharp note of the double slashes on Snappy's gnarled wrist, and looked expertly into his eyes.

"My hoss took a notion to go back," Sappy explained with difficulty. "Then a sidewinder took a notion to bite me."

"I see. 'Tain't often a feller kin be bit by a sidewinder an' live to tell th' story." Bill regarded Sappy with the approval of one he-man for another. "You must be right tough, mister."

"I am," nodded Sappy with returning vigor. "I'm as tough as they make 'em. I come from a tough family. Got any grub about you, young feller?"

"Not me." Bill grinned. "But if you'll h'ist yore leg over that there hoss o' mine, we'll have yuh sittin' with yore feet under a table in about two jerks of a calf's tail; savvy?"

He aided the old man to get into the saddle, and then walked briskly ahead, leading the animal by the bit. Sappy was getting stronger every minute. He perceived that he was no longer surrounded by bleak desert canyon, but by one of the most pleasing prospects he had ever beheld. Suddenly the significance of what he was beholding dawned upon him.

"Whose ranch is this here?" he demanded.

"Jim McKay's," the cowboy called back over his shoulder. "Double Bar O's th' brand. Finest ranch in th' state, mister. More'n ten thousand cows, too; all first-class, prime stuff." He waved his hand at the surrounding scenery. "Jim bought it five years ago, lock, stock an' bar'l. It's th' best payin' ranch——"

"Pretty soft fer McKay," remarked Sappy O'Neill bitterly. The cowboy looked back in surprise. "Fell into it easy, didn't he? Nothin' to do but set on th' front porch, I reckon, an' watch th' money roll in. That's what he always wanted—damn him!"

"You know him?"

"Used to." Sappy's red-rimmed eyes glared into the cowboy's. His hand fell to his six-gun, to which he had clung all

through the horrible hours of delirium in the canyon. "Keep right on walkin', young feller. You're doin' fine. Me an' Onion Head McKay has got a score to settle; savvy? We'll keep right on goin' 'til we reach yore boss's front porch."

"But look here!" exclaimed Bill in alarm. That the old man he had just rescued was locoed was evident. "Better gimme that gun. You don't want it——"

"Don't I?" Sappy's voice was grim, and his grizzled face bore out his voice. "You jest see if I don't; that's all I gotta say. Git a move on yuh. I don't aim to hurt *you* none, not onless yuh start gittin' hostile. Only yuh better not go after yore hardware, or I'll have to take it away from yuh."

The young man was at a distinct disadvantage. There was that in the old man's tone that bespoke adamant purpose. He could get his gun out a lot quicker than Bill could. He held the strategic advantage.

Bill decided to use diplomacy, for the present at least. He affected a cheerful grin.

"Jest as you say," he said with an affectation of heartiness. He had heard somewhere that the thing to do with crazy folks was to humor them. Also, to keep them engaged in conversation. The ranch house was now less than half a mile distant, and the form of Mr. McKay was discernible on the porch. Bill could even see the faint gleam of the light on his bald head. "Where did yuh know my boss, anyway?"

"Don't make no difference where," said Sappy sharply. "Me an' him worked a minin' claim together, an' he run off with all the gold, damn him! That's how come he bought this ranch. Always talkin' about buyin' a ranch an' takin' it easy th' rest of his life. Well, he ain't gonna take it easy much longer."

"You been lookin' fer him all this time?"

"I have. Everywhere he was likely to go, I went. I jest found out four days ago where he was. That's why I'm here."

"Don't seem like Jim McKay could be that kind of a gent," the cowboy suggested. They had turned into the short lane that led to the ranch house by this time. "Never seemed like that to us boys."

"Of course he didn't," snorted Sappy O'Neill bitterly. "That's jest th' kind of a low down coyote he is—gits a feller's confidence, an' then throws him when he ain't lookin'. That's Onion Head McKay, damn him!"

"Yuh don't aim tuh—kill him, do yuh?"

"I do," retorted Sappy. "I aim tuh let so much daylight through his carcass it couldn't be used tuh dam up an irrigation ditch. I've come through to do it, young feller, an' I shore aim to carry out what I started to do. Keep right on walkin'!"

Onion Head McKay remained in the chair on the porch when he saw his hand walking up the lane leading the horse, with the hulked form of the rescued one in the saddle. It was not the first time that misinformed travelers had come out of Sidewinder Canyon and required first aid. Nevertheless, as the pair came closer he sat forward in the chair and stared fixedly at the man in the saddle. A flush came over his bronzed face, mounting even to the shining surface of his hairless dome. He had several times scrutinized him through the binoculars. He rose and descended the steps to the ground.

Something in the expression of the cowboy warned him of danger. The old man in the saddle was without a hat, his hair standing out in all directions. His right hand rested casually on the butt of the forty-five that protruded from his holster. Onion Head McKay wore no gun.

"It—it ain't——"

"Yes, it is, too," said Sappy O'Neill, calmly, hunching his shoulders slightly and boring the rancher with his hard eyes. "It's me, Onion Head. What's left of me, anyhow. Glad tuh see me, ain't yuh?"

He sneered the query sarcastically. When Sappy sneered his unshaven countenance was not a nice thing to look at. The bitter rankling of five years showed in it. The cowboy had turned, and his eyes were darting about rapidly, seeking a way out of the dangerous situation. Sappy drew his gun and balanced it expertly.

"I see you ain't heeled," he observed. "Well, I don't aim to let yuh git heeled; either. If this young feller tries anything funny, I'll drill him first. Then I'll git you, Onion Head."

The noise of the horse breaking in the corral made it necessary for Sappy to talk above an ordinary key. The punchers working at the task were out of sight around a corner of the house. A shout would bring them; but both McKay and Bill, the cowboy, knew that before that help could arrive tragedy would have been enacted. They remained silent under the menace of the gun in Sappy's hand.

"You done me dirt, Onion Head," Sappy pursued. "I trusted yuh, too. You was my pardner, an' I trusted yuh. But yuh done me dirt. You ain't fit tuh live. Now yore time has come."

He paused, and the rancher found his voice at last. The thing had happened so suddenly he had not had time to think clearly. The appearance of Sappy O'Neill was like one risen from the dead, in a manner of speaking.

"Listen, Sappy," he said. "You may not believe it, but I done my best to find you. I shore did. Only you'd gone, an' nobody knowed where you'd gone. I couldn't find hide nor hair of you. I——"

"Oh, you did!" cackled Sappy. "Stole my money first, an' then tried to find me. That was right nice of you, Onion Head."

"I did, I tell you!" Onion Head's voice cracked a little with the strain. "Wait a while, an' I'll prove it to you. Wait——"

"I've waited five years, Onion Head." Sappy raised the gun slowly to a focus. In his eyes there was the insane light of an insane purpose. "I've hunted all over hell. Yesterday my hoss deserted me in that there hell-hole of a canyon, an' after that a rattlesnake bit me. But I started out five years ago to find you, Onion Head, an' here I am. All th' rattlesnakes on earth couldn't 'a' stopped me. Yore time has come."

"But wait, I tell you!" The rancher almost screamed the words. The situation had rendered him desperate. "Don't be a damned fool! I tell you I wrote you! I even sent you——"

The cowboy, in whose belt reposed a loaded six-gun that would have reversed the situation could he have drawn it in time, looked sick. If he made so much as a single motion toward the gun, he knew he would pay for the act with his life. And yet murder was about to be done.

"Don't shoot!" he begged. "Give a man a chance to explain, can't yuh?"

"Ain't nothin' to explain," snapped the man on the horse.

"There is, too," cried Onion Head eagerly. "Put that gun down a minute, an' I'll tell you. I got a chance to buy this ranch dirt cheap. Heard about it when I got to town with th' ore. Had to act quick. That's why I come right on here—to close th' deal. Then——"

"You're a doggoned poor liar," Sappy sneered. "Anyhow, yuh bought it with my money, didn't yuh?"

"Yes—but I sent you——"

A shrill whistle cut through his speech. His eyes darted past Sappy O'Neill, who turned instinctively. Instantly the cowboy's gun was out and covering the other.

"Up with 'em," he snapped coldly. "Quick!"

Sappy had raised his hands even before he had turned back to face the gun in Bill's hand. His gun dangled in the air, then dropped to the ground. The cowboy stepped forward and patted him expertly over the body. Then he stepped back and grinned relievedly.

"I reckon yo're jest locoed a little," he said. "But don't try to start nothin', old-timer, or I'll have tuh plug you anyhow. Put 'em down if you want to."

Sappy lowered his hands shamefacedly. "Guess I'm gittin' old," he muttered. "I shore am." His hard eyes turned to the rancher. "But you're a dirty, sneakin', white-livered skunk jest th' same, Onion Head. An' I'll git yuh some day, no matter how long it takes."

He scrambled stiffly out of the saddle and swayed on his feet. The cowboy caught him before he fell, easing him to the ground. The rancher was smiling in relief.

"We'll carry him into his house," he

said. "Guess all he needs is somethin' to eat."

They carried the surprisingly light form between them, and in five minutes Sappy was lying on a clean bed, his grizzled face gray under the bronze of years, his seamed eyelids showing blue veins of age. They divested him of his worn boots and coat. The cowboy glanced surreptitiously at his employer once or twice, but the latter gave no sign.

"Better have th' cook rustle him something to eat," he directed. "He'll be all right after a while. He's tough as they make 'em—or used to be. Guess he hasn't changed much."

The cowboy nodded. "That postman shore saved yore life, Jim. Blew his whistle jest in time, didn't he?"

"Jest in time tuh let you git yore gun," McKay replied soberly. "Much obliged, Bill. I'll trot out an' see what he brought."

"I'll see th' cook," said Bill.

Two minutes later the rancher had returned to Sappy O'Neill's side and was staring down at a long envelope in his hand. The envelope was considerably soiled, and fairly covered with red and blue stamped letters, to say nothing of numerous scribbled inscriptions. It looked to have traveled a very long way indeed.

It was addressed to "Mr. Henry O'Neill, Discovery Point, Colorado."

There was a queer expression on McKay's face as he gently inserted the envelope, without opening it, between the unconscious old man's gnarled fingers.

"Let him find it when he wakes up, th' locoed old fool," he chuckled as he went out of the room.

SAPPY O'NEILL was a very tough person indeed.

The sun was setting in a bed of brilliant crimson, casting a soft glow over the Redondo Range, as he sat in a big chair on Onion Head McKay's front porch that very same evening, staring at Onion Head's broad acres. In an adjoining chair sat Onion Head himself, his bald head glittering in the slanting rays. Both the old men were smoking cigars, a sign that the occasion was an auspicious one.

For the dozenth time Sappy drew forth the long envelope and extracted the contents—a piece of folded parchment covered with shaded writing and flourishing signatures. From the kitchen came the clattering of dishes. Several cowboys, smoking cigarettes and talking, lolled under the cottonwood that shaded the bunkhouse.

Sappy glanced sidewise at Onion Head McKay.

"I don't deserve this, when yuh come right down to it," he remarked. "A pardner oughta have faith in his pardner. When you didn't come back, that time, I started right out to git you. Jumped to th' conclusion you'd done me dirt. Carried that idea around with me all this time. Jumped all over hell, from pillar tuh post, lookin' fer you; an' all th' time here was this deed to half yore ranch, made out all right an' proper, trailin' me from one end of th' country to th' other."

"You always did go off half-cocked," returned Onion Head gravely. "That's how come them Injuns never got nothin' but my hair, I reckon."

"But I don't——"

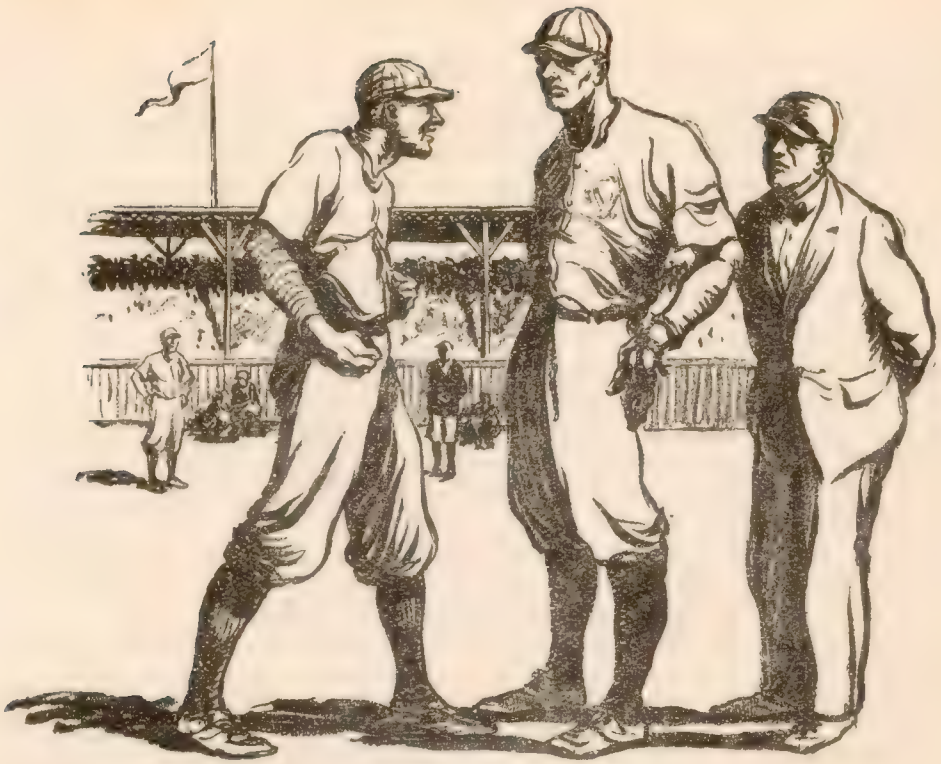
"Shut up!" ordered Onion Head. "How does that there sunset strike yuh?"

"It's right purty."

"That's what I think. You an' me are gonna sit here on this porch an' watch them sunsets all th' rest of our lives. Let th' young fellers do th' work. That's all they're good fer."

"That's right," agreed Sappy.

The sun went down, but the glow of their cigars continued far into the velvety night.



FOR PETE'S SAKE

A BASEBALL STORY

By Bud Jones

"This baby, Pistol Pete, has got 'swift' which makes Walter Johnson's fast ball look like a stuffed shirt threw up there by a hat check girl."

"I AIN'T disputin' that this monkey is out from here to Russia," acknowledges Hap O'Brien, shiftin' his cigar stub to a talkin' position in the corner of his mouth. "A blind man could of saw that. But what I mean is, these babies lead a tough life and a man is li'ble to call a bad one anytime. I ain't razzin' none of 'em."

Mr. O'Brien is holdin' forth in the Maroon clubhouse, the subject bein' a raw decision at the plate in the last frame of a tough contest, which decision robs the hired hands of Honest John McCaskey of a ball game.

"They should ought to give that guy a tin cup and put him on the street," growls Rabbit Garrity, kickin' a cleated shoe across the locker room where it lands in the middle of Shag Moran's bare back. "Where do they get the umpires in this league? Outa the Home for the Blind?"

"Well now, Rabbit," soothes Mr. O'Brien, "this here Mehaffey ain't such a bad arbiter. He sees 'em pretty good most of the time. Did you ever do any umpirin'?"

"Hell, NO!" snorts Rabbit. "When I go blind I'll take to sellin' pencils."

"See?" Mr. O'Brien appeals to me with a risin' affliction in his voice. "D'ya see, Johnny? He don't know what he's talkin' about. Me, I seen this old national pastime from every angle—player, umpire and fan—and I don't have to tell you these babies lead a tough life. All a player's gotta do is keep his eye on the old apricot; a umpire's gotta watch every-

thing, and at the same time keep his eye on the stands in case they are any missives in the shape of pop bottles or rocks headed in his direction. And if one of 'em kicks one, everybody in the park, up to and includin' the players they're workin' with, wants to murder them on the spot. They got plenty guts, don't think they ain't. They wouldn't be out there takin' their life in their hand every afternoon if they didn't.

"D'ya think I don't know what it means? Listen. I handled a indicator in the old Intermountain League which, if you remember, blows up on the Fourth of July because they can't keep in umpires. A tiger tamer leads a calm and peaceful life compared with the arbiters in *that* league. Me and Tommy Carroll is the only ones on the job when the firecrackers start soundin' off, and take it from me, we're plenty shopworn—*plenty*. That said Independence Day don't mean no more to me and Tommy than the Armistice means to the Germans.

"In them days they ain't no closed season on umpires; half the bugs in the stands is out there to kill a umpire, and the other half's out there to *see* a umpire killed. Ast Tommy, he'll tell you. Why, say, the peanut butchers in that league honk, 'Peanuts, popcorn and *rocks*,' and business is brisk, although them babies over there don't go in so much for peanuts and popcorn. They was a bohunk up at Butte which makes a fortune outa a rock pile located just outside the park. And I ain't usin' my hat for a megaphone when I tell you they take us to and from the parks in the police patrol wagon. I wear smoked glasses as a disguise so much that season that my eyes ain't been right since. Call a bad one and look for a low hill."

"Somebody should ought to chase this yegg Mehaffey over one of them low hills," snaps Rabbit, departin' in disgust for the shower room.

Mr. O'Brien shrugs his shoulders and picks himself a soft spot on the end of a bench. "Good boy—Rabbit," he remarks, noddin' toward the nude form of the burnt-up little shortstopper. "Young and plenty of fight. Nice pair of hands, too. Needs experience. He'll go up. Not enough of the youngsters nowadays got the old fight; they's too many bookkeepers in the game. Plenty of the boys in that old Intermountain has the fight—*plenty*. Did Tommy Carroll ever tell you about his year in *that* circuit? No? He could go into vaudeville with his line."

Mr. O'Brien applies a match to his cigar butt and leans back against a locker before starting his story.

ONE day me and Tommy makes connections in Boise, Idaho, Tommy bein' scheduled to work there the next week, and me bein' on my way to Salt Lake.

"How's things, Hap?" he inquires when he has made sure it's me behind the smoked glasses.

I show him a bump on my dome.

"It's a great little league," says Tommy. "If a man don't go foul tip crazy, they rock him goofy. Let's get a drink."

This is at one o'clock in the afternoon. At six we flow outa a little dump on a side street with the blue glasses in our pocket and a quart on the hip.

"'Sa great little league, if you don't care whatcha say," observes Tommy pleasantly.

"You call 'em Tommy," says I amiable.

A block down the street they's a movie theater with a pasteboard dummy of some pitcher actor standin' out in front.

"Yer out!" Tommy tells the pasteboard gent, at the same time jerkin' his thumb over his shoulder.

"Wasn't even close," I back Tommy up.

Ten feet farther on Tommy turns around sudden and walks back to the dummy. "What's that?" says he. "Didn'tcha hear me? I said 'yer out,' and no back talk or I'll chase ya. I'm a notion to—— Listen, Hap, I got a idea. We'll take this baby up to the room and I'll show ya how a umpire should oughta handle bushers in this league." And Tommy takes the pasteboard movie actor under his arm.

Me and Tommy is pretty tight by the time we get the dummy up to his room and set it up in a corner. Neither one of us have had a chance to unload what's on

our chest since we got into *that* league, and we sure take advantage of the opportunity. First Tommy gives it a bawlin' out and pushin' around, and then I take a turn. In between times, we steam ourselves up with the quart bottle.

"Why you blankety-blank busher," Tommy growls, jabbin' the dummy with his elbow. "What hay wagon dropped *you* off? What's that? You would, eh? Say, listen, you sod buster, I was playin' Class Double A baseball when you was pilotin' a plow, and I'll be in this league when you're back in Sapville manicurin' the hogs. Any more back talk from you and out you go. I should oughta knock your ears down for you now, you blankety-blank, blank, blankety-blank *busher!*"

By the time we can see bottom in that quart, I'm so sore that I forget myself and knock the dummy's head off. But Tommy's gone to sleep with his clothes on and it don't make no difference. So I go away from there and pour myself onto a Salt Lake sleeper. Ast Tommy, he'll tell you. Tommy'll tell you *plenty.*

At this junction Mr. O'Brien takes time out to perform the apparently impossible feat of relightin' his cigar stub which has now wore down to a half inch len'th.

"They sure is a lotta goofy ball hands in *that* league," he resumes with a vacant look in his eye. "And I don't mean nevertheless. Speakin' of left handers: D'ja ever hear of Pistol Pete Paulson? No? Thought maybe you might of run acrost him in one of them thousand leagues under the sea. I never see a——Hot dam!"

Mr. O'Brien gives up the attempt to get any smoke through the wore-out butt and throws it disgusted on the floor. After which he frisks himself absent-minded until I pass him across another rope.

"Started out with plenty," he explains, "but I get so excited in that last innin' that I chew 'em all up. Thanks, Johnny."

YOU never run acrost Pistol Pete, eh? Well, they's nothin strange (puff, puff) about that; he never lasted (puff) long in baseball. But while he *did* last, he showed the boys and gals *plenty.*

Pete ain't much to look at—a big tow-headed Scandihoovian with a mild blue eye and a million-dollar arm. He's still got hay in his hair the first time I see him, and a man would figure, after a look at him, that if he's a pitcher, it's in one of them horseshoe leagues. However, you can't judge no books by their cover in any man's league—he's got more smoke than I ever looked at durin' a long and checkered career in baseball. Listen, Johnny, this baby's got speed which makes Walter Johnson's fast ball look like a stuffed shirt threw up there by a hat check girl. Is *that* swift, I ast you? Take it or leave it.

I can't recall right off the reel of ever seein' a busher with a lot of fast which had what might be called control. Pistol Pete ain't no exception. He's wilder than a broken crankshaft. The day Pop Hamlin sends him in up at Missoula for his first start, he has the boys in the press box wavin' a white han'kerchief on the end of a cane before he has taken the regulation number of warmup heaves from the box, and before the first innin' is well under way, he's throwin' 'em through the screen back of first base.

If Pop had of left him in the full innin', he would proba'ly have established some kind of new record. The only thing he didn't do was throw one outa the park. A Mack Sennett bathing beauty could of caught him that day in a grease swimmin' suit; he never comes within ten feet of the plate at any time durin' his brief stay on the firin' line.

"If this big sod buster ever finds out that home plate ain't up in the stands back of first base, he should oughta make a fair sort of hurler," I tell Pop Hamlin after the game. "He's got plenty of fast."

"You said it," admits Pop. "I'll make a pitcher outa him yet, if he don't eat himself outa the league."

"A tapeworm, eh?"

"Tapeworm? Say, he can do more things with a knife than Judge Landis can with a pen. A baseball bat ain't no more at home in Louisville, Ky., than he is in a restaurant; he gets all his ideas off a menu, and is eatin' for a .950 average. A $4.95 lunch ain't nothin' for him—on the

road. You can shake him down any time and a couple sandwidges will rattle outa his pockets. He takes 'em to bed with him to growl over durin' the night."

"That's what's wrong with him, probably," says I. "He ain't got his mind on the race."

"He ain't got his mind on nothin' but eats," Pop growls. "He's the greatest pitcher in the world if he had fight and control. Nobody ever had the smoke that he's got, and nobody ever had less guts. A jackrabbit's a hard guy alongside of him. But I ain't through with him yet. I'll turn him inside out and take all the appetite outa him unless he gets in there and shows me some pitchin'."

The above conversation takes place along the early part of the season, and I don't get another look at Pistol Pete for six weeks, this time at Salt Lake. Pop ain't turned him inside out yet, but he *has* done wonders with him. Nobody ever accused Pop of not knowin' how to handle pitchers and Pete shows all the earmarks of havin' been handled. He's still takin' his shots at the press box occasion'lly, but any time he can get three in there before he walks a batter, he's got a strikeout—you can't hit 'em if you can't see 'em. I'm tellin' you, Johnny, this busher's got a hop on his fast ball that ain't human; it comes up there lookin' like a kidney pill and—zip—breaks a half foot. None of these babies is takin' a toe-hold on him, take it from me. I don't blame 'em—one of them French 75's wouldn't leave no more of a mark on a man's head than his fast ball.

Pete lasts four innin's this second time I look at him, Pop jerkin' him after he has passed three straight. At that, when he quits he has eight strikeouts against his seven walks, and none of these Salt Lake sticksmiths has even looked like they wanted a hit off him.

"You're busher is tamin' down," I tell Pop.

"You said it," Pop agrees, "and they's still plenty of room for improvement. Wouldn't he be a wonder if he had control and fight?"

As the season goes along, Pistol Pete's control improves. He works three full games, in one of which he sets a league strikeout record at Helena, turnin' eighteen back at the plate. In addition to the above, he has gone seven innin's a half dozen times and has finished a couple contests for other chuckers. The bugs around the circuit are beginnin' to talk about him, them said eighteen strikeouts havin' turned the spotlight on him and win him the *nom de garret* of Pistol Pete. It is also rumored that other parties besides the bugs is takin' a interest in him, to which, a coupla Coast League clubs. They ain't strikin' out eighteen men in *any* league so regular that the performance don't get a tumble.

I work behind Pete in one game the middle of June when he blows up in the seventh after standin' the opposition on their ear and whiffin' a even dozen batters. With two down in the seventh, Pete dusts off Biff Carnegie. Biff gets up with blood in his eye and walks out to the middle of the diamond.

"You blankety-blank Swede," Biff tells him, "if you even come close to me again, I'll knock your blankety-blank block off."

Pete don't come within six feet of the dish after that. Pop jerks him when Biff and the batter followin' him is passed on four pitched balls apiece.

I run into Pop that night, scowlin' over a scoop of suds at a little table in a beer garden. He motions me over.

"Sit down, Hap, and knock one over," he invites gloomy. "You see what happened this afternoon?"

I nod.

"You got the answer, then," he says. "That ain't the first time it happens. He's done the same thing a dozen times before, and he'll never win another game off the Butte or Salt Lake clubs if he stays in this league till he's got whiskers like Sandy Claus. They got his number—he can't take the beef. No guts."

I nod again.

"I never work harder with a young pitcher in my life than I have with this baby," Pop goes on, sad. "You know how wild he is when he joins us? He's got control now. You see how he worked

the first six frames of that game to-day? Had plenty of control, didn't he? Can't nobody hit him when he's in there pitchin'. I've went as far as I can go—you can't make a pit bull outa a poddle."

"He's yellow as a taxicab," says I.

Pop nods. "And the tough part of it is," he wails, "I have him practic'lly sold to the Indians for fifteen grand this mornin'. Old George Ingle is up in the stands this afternoon. George wouldn't give fifteen cents a dozen for him now, and you can't blame George. I wouldn't either. A million-dollar arm and nothin' to go with it but a appetite. If he had any fight, he'd make 'em throw away their bats in the Coast League or any other league. What'm I goin' to do?"

"Get Old George to take another look at him," I su'gest. "Start him again to-morrow."

"No use. The same thing would happen again, only quicker."

"Ain't there no way of makin' him fight?"

"He wouldn't fight if he was drafted. I trim him twice in the clubhouse myself, thinkin' it might do some good. He won't even put up his hands."

"Give him another trimmin'," says I, "and ship him back where he come from. You might learn him control, but you can't learn him fight."

If I ain't mixed up on my entomology, one of them old Roman congressmen once remarked that 'no man is so lowdown that some dame don't fall for him,' or words to that effect. Mary McGuire proves it.

"Ain't Pistol Pete Paulson goin' to pitch again this week?" she inquires of me one evenin' several days after Pop has give me the sad story of the fifteen grand.

"Not in Butte," I tells her.

"Why not?" says she, depositin' my rib-steak-well and French fried on the counter.

"He's the best pitcher Missoula's got; he's the best pitcher in the league."

"He is and he ain't," says I.

"I ain't no good at riddles," says Mary. "Spell it out."

"Y-E-L-L-O-W," I oblige.

"And where," Mary flares indignant, "did you learn to spell so good. You wouldn't say that to Pete."

"Why waste words on Pete? He knows it."

"I think you're a liar," she tells me with consider'ble heat, "but I'll give you the best of it. What makes you think he's yellow?"

"What do *you* care?"

Mary shows me a quarter-carat jackstone on her business finger. "Pete give me that," she explains. "We'll be married at the end of the season."

"Oh, well," says I. "That's different. I was only kiddin'."

"Ball players," says Mary, "don't kid about *that*. Tell me the truth."

I coulda fined myself a week's salary for gettin' into a hole like this. No man likes to make a dame feel bad, especially a good little Irish kid like Mary.

"Tell me the truth," she repeats. "You started it and I gotta right to know."

"You said it, Mary," I admit. "You gotta right to know. Listen: If Pete wasn't yellow he'd of been sold this week for fifteen thousand dollars."

"Whatta you mean—sold? And who'd want to buy Pete?"

"Old George Ingle."

"Who's he?"

"Ingle? He's scout for the Indians."

"I didn't know they was any left," says Mary.

"Any what left?"

"Any Indian scouts. What does he want Peter for—a wild west show? It sounds like a lotta ketchup to me."

So I explain to her about Old George bein' a ivory hunter for the Seattle club, which is called Indians, and how he's sweet on Pete and would be willin' to go fifteen grand for him until he finds out Pete ain't got no fight.

"And do you mean to tell me that this Indian spy would pay that much money for Pete if Pete would fight?" she snaps.

"Well, I wouldn't call him no spy," says I, "but otherwise you got a fair understandin' of it. You see, it's like this: Pete's proba'ly got more smoke than any other man in baseball to-day. He's got a million-dollar arm and a dime's worth of—er—er—nerve. Do you get it?"

"I get this much: If this Indian from

Seattle knew that Pete'd fight, he'd give $15,000 for him. Who'd get the $15,000 —Pete?"

"No," I explain again. "The Missoula club'd get it. But if anyone, you for instants, could put the sale over by convincin' Old George Ingle that Pete is a fighter, I'd say they was $2500 in it for them, speakin' unofficial. And it would mean that Pete gets a lot more money next year than he's gettin' now."

"That twenty-five hundert would start us off grand," says Mary thoughtful. "And I can do it. Will you help me, Mr. O'Brien?"

"Ain't that a woman? Three minutes ago she's callin' me a liar, and now it's Mr. O'Brien."

"What's the use, Mary?" says I. "He wouldn't fight for twenty-five hundert."

"He'll fight for *me*," Mary comes back, her eyes flashin' and her chin tilted. "He'll fight for *ME*. Will you help me—for Pete's sake?"

"Pete ain't nothin' in my young life, Mary," I tells her, "but I'll give *you* a hand. You got what he ain't. Whatta you want me to do?"

"Find out does that $2500 go in case Pete's sold. I'll tell you the rest to-morrow."

"Oak," says I.

Mary ain't no sireen; she's just a little Irish girl with blue eyes, a turned-up nose and a evident taste for knick-knacks in the way of future husbands, but if this big bum, Pete, has her spirit, what a chucker he'd be.

"Pete *would* get hisself engaged to a waitress," Pop comments when I spill the conversation with Mary. "It'd have to be something connected with a restaurant before he'd be interested. What does she think she can do with the big quitter?"

"She says she can make him fight," says I, "whether that means anything or not. If she can put the sale through, she wants a $2500 cut. Does that go?"

"Sure," says Pop. "He's a total loss, so far as a sale goes now, and they ain't no chance of makin' him fight. He wouldn't battle with gunnysacks across Lake Michigan."

So I get my instructions from Mary the next day.

"All I want you to do," she tells me, "is bring this Seattle Indian in for dinner to-night. Sit at that table over in the corner—I'll have it reserved for you. Then keep your eyes open. Does the $2500 go?"

"It does."

"Fine. Pete's as good as sold."

Me and Pop and Old George is toyin' with our proteins, calories and ex sentra that night at the table Mary has reserved for us, when Pistol Pete dashes in and grabs off a stool at the counter. He's got the same look in his eye that a circus lion gets in his along about dinner time.

Two minutes later a coupla hard-lookin' palookos drop in and take a seat on each side of Pete.

"Hello, Cutie," one of these birds says to Mary as she brings in the first installment of Pete's order. "What you got to eat?"

"Can the 'Cutie'," Mary tells him. "And if you can't read what's wrote on the menu, you're outa luck."

"Haw, haw, haw!" bellows the yegg on the other side of Pete, at the same time helpin' himself to Pete's end of the butter and a couple slices of Pete's bread. "Snappy, what? You can learn about women from her."

Mary has departed haughty for the kitchen and Pete's neck is beginnin' to get red.

"Yeah?" growls the other, spearin' a tomato outa Pete's salad. "When I learn anything about women, it ain't goin' to be from no hash slinger."

"The red is up to Pete's ears by the time Mary gets back with his steak and trimmin's, and it goes a couple degrees higher when the yegg which has took him for his bread and butter, grabs the order outa Mary's hands before she can get it on the counter.

"Just what I wanted, Sister," this party says amiable. "Couldn't of done better myself. Get the big ham here another one. I'll eat this."

Mary don't say nothin'; she just stands and looks at Pete. And Pete gets redder.

"Whatsa matter, Buddy?" inquires the baby with the steak. "Don't you like it?"

Whatever Pete may have to say to this pleasant query, ain't said, because about this time, the other tramp reaches over and chucks Mary under the chin, for which bit of horseplay Mary slips him a left-hand receipt to the chops.

"Where was you raised, you big bum—in a spittoon?" Mary rasps, peeved. "If I was a man——*Pete!*"

Pete has slid backward off his stool and is standin', redder'n a pair of Boston American socks, his arms hangin' at his sides.

"Pete!" Mary says again, sharp. *"Pete!"*

And Pete goes to work.

Pop always argues it's losin' the steak which rouses Pete's Scandihoovian.

"Ain't nobody won't fight if you take their meat away from 'em," says Pop. Me—I don't know. I've see a lotta lap-dogs start growlin' when they wasn't no meat around. Women got the same influence. D'ja ever notice it, Johnny?

Pop may of been right, at that; anyway, the first party which participates in one of Pete's socks is the yegg which takes him for the steak. And when I say *sock,* I don't mean nothin' else. Pete says it with a left; the victim don't say nothin'—he slides off his stool with a mouthful of Pete's steak, and bids a temp'rary farewell to the assembled comp'ny.

In the meantime, the other yegg is on his feet ready to do battle, and from where I'm settin', it looks like he can do that little thing. This is fair enough with Pete, who is now rarin' to go, and not particular who he goes with. By a odd trick of fate, the first long right which Pete cuts loose, parks on this baby's button.

I may of mentioned a few hundert words back, that Pete can get more stuff on the old onion outa that right arm of his than anybody I ever seen in or out of baseball. That goes. He's got the same trick with a punch—both hands. This second yegg makes a funny face and goes down with a armful of stools.

Theoretic'lly, the mêlée is now *fini,* as we used to say of *la guerre.* Not so. Pete, havin' started, craves action. The third victim is a innocent bystander which is unfortunately occupyin' a adjacent stool. Pete flips a left to his whiskers and starts down the line—right, left, right, left—with somebody droppin' at every gesture. A big guy, halfway down the line, picks up a stool for crownin' purposes. Pete knocks him, stool and all, into a corner before he can get into action. Mary screams—get that—and Pop Hamlin grins.

When the police arrive, Pete has the restaurant seven down at the sixth stool, Old George Ingle havin' inadvertently got hisself knocked for a hole in, on tryin' to arbitrate.

"And that," says Pop, as John Law departs with Pete, "as near as I can figure it out, is *that.*"

"You'll get him out, Mr. Hamlin," begs Mary.

"Not to-night," says Pop. "To-morrow. I want him to get good and mad to-night—he works to-morrow. Missoula's battery for to-morrow's game," he says, turnin' to me, "is Paulson and Roberts. Don't ast me again."

It's in the sixth frame of "to-morrow's" game that Pete, once more free, white and twenty-one, and with the count standin' 4-0 in his favor, dusts off Biff Carnegie. Biff gets up with blood in his eye and starts for the middle of the diamond.

"You blankety-blank Swede," Biff tells him, "if you ever come close——"

"I heard you the first time," says Pete, meetin' him halfway. "If you're bat-shy, send somebody in to hit for you. I'm goin' to dust you off again, and if you don't like it, you know the address of the clubhouse—or you can take your cuts now."

Biff pops out on the next pitched ball, but I will say for him that he chooses Pete after the game and wins hisself a neat cuffin'.

The final count on this contest is: Missoula, 7; Butte, 0. Pete has let 'em down without a blow, whiffin' sixteen of their wreckin' crew, and allowin' only two men to reach first, both on infield boots.

"The deal's on," Old George, nursin' a

large lump on the jaw, tells Pop in the clubhouse. "I'll take him."

"Take who?" Pop asts innocent.

"Paulson," Old George snaps. "He's worth fifteen grand to me."

"Oh, Paulson," says Pop like he never heard of such a thing before. "It's Pete you want. Well, if you want Pete, you'll have to raise the ante five grand; he's worth twenty to me."

And Old George, cussin' Pop back to the third generation, goes for it.

Mary don't seem to develop no temperature over the news when I break it to her that night.

"You and Pete can start housekeepin', Mary," I tells her at dinner. "Pete's sold to Seattle. The twenty-five hundert's yours."

"Yeah?" says Mary.

"Sure," says I. "And you'll proba'ly live out on the Coast after this, eh?"

"Well, I don't know," says Mary doubtful.

"Why not? Pete'll be a wow in that league, and it's a good climate."

"Yeah?"

"*Say,*" says I. "What's eatin' on you? Don't two grand and a half mean nothin' in your young life?"

"Why, yes," Mary admits, comin' outa her hop. "Of course it does, Mr. O'Brien, and I can't tell you how thankful I am to you for your help. But, you see, I don't think Pete'll want to go out to Seattle, after all."

"Then you don't get the twenty-five hundert," I tells her.

"I know, but Mr. Fitzgibbons says we'll make that back in no time, and a lot more on top of it."

"Mr. Fitzgibbons? Who's he?"

"You know Nifty Fitzgibbons, the box-fight manager?"

"Sure I know him," says I. "But what's he got to do with Pete?"

"Well, you see," Mary explains, "Mr. Fitzgibbons was in the restaurant last night when Pete got mad, and Mr. Fitzgibbons says he can make Pete the light heavyweight champeen of the Rocky Mountains or something."

"Don't tell me," I begs, "that Pete is sucker enough to give up a chance at Class AA baseball for that line of Nifty's."

"They's lotsa money in it," says Mary. "Mr. Fitzgibbons says so. And besides, Pete's tired of baseball. He says the game's too tame for him."

BIG RODEO DAYS HIT THE RANGES

THERE'S not a lot of work on the cattle ranges in July and it's a good thing, for every cowboy who can possibly get off has signed up for a rodeo or stampede celebration somewhere in the West from Alberta to Arizona.

In 1926 there were seventy-five rodeos or Wild West contests west of the Mississippi in the United States and forty in the Canadian Northwest, all offering cash prizes ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars. Most of the rodeos were in towns which had pioneer history behind them as a part of real frontier development. In connection were held live stock exhibitions and county or state fairs. Pageants and episodes of a real educational and historical value depicted by actual pioneers and Indians aided in attracting large crowds to various centralized localities.

Wild West cowboy contests and frontier celebrations are here to stay, despite predictions each year by prominent persons who are authorities on public amusements that the horse riding and steer branding stuff is out and over. They advanced the theory that the automobile and moving pictures had killed the Western thriller, and to see cowboys riding in real life was too prosaic. They were wrong, for the last season saw more cowboy shows with larger attendance figures than any previous year. The automobile, expected to kill the outdoor show, really aided in bringing folks from greater distances who otherwise would have remained in their own community.

The old time Western atmosphere prevails throughout an entire horse-bucking contest. The shows are staged in the open, with a natural location, a grassy hill for an amphitheater and a broad flat plain for the stage.

The horses used in the rodeos are generally advertised and recognized by spectators as outlaws, wild stallions fresh from the mesquite and sage.

There is little of the cruelty and inhuman treatment to which so many object in complaints sent to newspapers every summer. Those in charge of Western homecoming days are well aware that the majority of those attending do not want to see anything cruel on the entertainment program. There are plenty of thrilling feats of horsemanship to be demonstrated without resorting to undue urging, such as placing tacks under the saddle, sharp spurs, whips, or pepper in barbed bridle bits.

BLOOD FOR GOLD

By

John Beames

The road to gold is a grim path; it is spattered with the blood of its defenders, and its lust is spent with the groans of the dying.

"HERE she is, boys," said Uncle Hopper, and stooped to a narrow ledge of greenstone schist that cut athwart the gray granite of the barrens. Drake promptly set up the tiny portable assay outfit he had laboriously packed across the rocky hills.

Uncle Hopper and Bull Webley set about tracing the vein from where it outcropped abruptly on the side of a low ridge to where it dipped sharply into the ground in a willow thicket, a distance in all of two thousand feet or so.

"Well?" clamored Bull, returning.

Drake looked up from his work with a lackluster eye. "Uh? Get me some wood, will you?"

"Well, but is it rich? That's what I want to know. What'll she run? Is she as big as what Uncle said?"

Drake's lips tightened in annoyance, but he controlled himself. It was necessary to suffer Bull, although he was a blatant fool, because he was strong and useful.

"Can't tell yet," he said in a quiet voice. "It looks pretty good. Tell you just as soon as I can. But get some more wood, a heap of wood, that's a good scout."

There was something like awe on Drake's face as he exhibited the little lump of gold that was the fruit of his day's work. It was late in the evening, night in any other latitude, for the sun was sloping to the horizon in the north. The dim red rays lit his sunken eyes with a strange radiance and cast deep shadows on his furrowed cheeks. His words were cautious and temperate.

"If she's as rich all the way down an' if she don't pinch out, why, she'll run anywhere up to fifteen hundred dollars a ton. But of course it won't do to bank on that. Anyway it's rich, and there's a lot of money right under our feet."

Bull sprang up with a weird bellow. He stood the hardships of the march well because of his youth, and he still had some surplus energy left. He was just under six feet tall, with immense sloping shoulders, a columnlike neck, and a small pointed skull. He had the strength of a gorilla and rather less than half a gorilla's intelligence.

He danced a grotesque dance on the crumbling granite and bayed to the steely arctic sky. "Oh gosh, what a time I'm a-goin' to have! I'm a-goin' to raise hell an' put a prop under. 'At's me. Goin' to have a di'mond big as a egg on each finger—an' stickpins. Wow! Sparklers, well, I should snigger. Play the ponies. Back my horse for a million. What do I care? Are they goin' to give me the road when I come by in my big red car? Are they? What I mean, are they? *I* guess yes. Wow!"

Hopper's joy was more temperate. Half a century of following the lure of gold over more than half the world had shrunken his originally small frame until he was a mere wisp of a man.

"Me for Californy," he said in a thin voice. "Settle down. Raise some fruit an' a little garden truck. An' sleep in a real bed in a honest-to-goodness nightshirt every night, every night, with a tight roof over my head. The sky's too blame leaky for a old man."

Only Drake said nothing. He was a silent man except when he had something to say, and just now he was thinking of a woman more than a thousand miles away, and of four children who displayed an amazing and heart-warming affection for their daddy.

The chill of the brief sub-arctic night had quieted the mosquitoes, and they rolled themselves in their blankets and slept until the sun was well away on his long journey round the horizon.

"Wonder if Haslam followed us?" said Drake casually over their frugal breakfast of flapjacks and pemmican.

"Huh, let him," blared Bull truculently. "We got the ground staked. He can't jump our claims an' he can't bluff me neither. Any time Haslam an' his gang think they can put something over, what I say, let 'em hop to it."

Drake sniffed. So far the adventure had been highly successful, but it remained to get back to civilization and record the claims, and if Haslam and his friends were somewhere between them and settled country a good many things might happen first.

They turned back, and three days later, Drake lay flat on the crest of a ridge and cautiously reconnoitred the river in the valley below. He came back to his friends looking grave.

"Haslam's right there right enough, and he's got a bunch with him."

"Huh, he can't bluff me," said Bull.

"He's not aiming to bluff," said Drake.

Uncle Hopper's white beard wagged goatlike. "Too bad, too bad," he lamented. "That Haslam's a bad man, he's a awful bad man."

Haslam had taken up a fine strategic position. On his right lay a wide lake many miles in length and on his left a little river ran out of an extensive swamp. He had effectually blocked the only road to the south and civilization for Drake and his companions.

"He's likely found our canoe," said Drake, "and sat down to wait till we came back. We'll wait till dark and then I'll go down and scout around. Maybe I can get the canoe back."

"But I'm hungry," objected Bull. "A man like me needs more'n a handful of pemmican, damn' stuff, an' one little slapjack a day. I'm starvin'. I'm going down right now an' tell Haslam where he gets off at."

Drake shrugged weary shoulders. "Well, all right; say good-by, Bull. Uncle and I'll tell your folks what happened you."

The worse of Bull was that it always took a great deal of argument to get through his thick skull. He was too strong to be hammered and too cross-grained to be humored. Drake had just influence enough to keep him from marching down to Haslam's camp, but not enough to draw him away.

An outpost of Haslam's saw them and discreetly signaled back. Drake looked up in the midst of his argument to see the little hollow in which they sat fringed with armed men.

From the rear came Haslam's mocking, metallic voice. "Well, ain't this fine? Back again. Glad to see you."

Drake and Hopper sat still, but Bull jumped up, rifle in hand. "You're damn'

right we're back!" he blustered. "What're you goin' to do about it, eh?"

Haslam grinned at him. He was a lean, high-shouldered man, with a gray, hairless face and broken nose. "Why, goin' to to ask you to supper," he replied smoothly. "Come right along before the grub gets cold."

The mere suggestion of a full meal was enough for the half-famished Bull. "Oh well, that's different," he said.

Drake, after one swift glance around, accepted the situation with his accustomed coolness. He rose with a half smile on his face. "Well, I call this real friendly," he said politely.

Surrounded by their captors they moved down to the camp on the river bank where a couple of small tents had been pitched on the edge of a willow thicket.

"What d'you think's goin' to happen to us?" inquired Hopper in an anxious whisper.

"Likely to be a good many things happen," said Drake. "But if we can make Bull keep his fool head closed we may get clear yet."

But the keen-witted Haslam was not the man to overlook Bull's weakness or to fail to profit by it.

"Well sir, had all that long tramp for nothin', eh?" he laughed raucously. "Gad, you must be sore at yourself!"

"Sore nothin'," roared Bull. "I ain't the man to go out an' come back empty-handed."

Drake reached out and kicked him gently behind the knee.

"Here, hey!" protested Bull, turning round. "What you kickin' me for?"

Drake's face expressed only mild surprise. "I never kicked you."

With a mocking grin, Haslam hooked his arm in Bull's and drew him away. Kirke and Melun, two of Haslam's followers, interposed, and Drake had impotently to watch the pair walk off together, deep in conversation.

"Well, how much did you tell him?" he queried a couple of hours later.

"Not much, you can bet," replied Bull with a cunning look and a wise shake of the head. "I got him guessin'. I just fooled with him. I told him there was a million dollars in it for me, but not a nickel for nobody else."

Drake passed a tired hand over his forehead. "You'd think," he suggested mildly, "that a man with the sense of a nit would keep his head closed and let him think we didn't find anything."

Slowly it percolated through Bull's skull that he had made a blunder. But the vanity of a fool made him truculent at once.

"I know what I'm doin', Mr. Man!" he snarled. "You're tryin' to ride me, that's what you are, an' that's something nobody can't get away with, see? *I* know what I'm doin'. I ain't let nothin' out. You better leave me be. Haslam can't bluff me, nor you can't neither."

He rose and lurched off to join Haslam and thus assert his independence.

"There's some fools," Drake observed to Hopper, "that you wonder how they ever lived to grow up. That sweet nephew of yours is headed for getting us all croaked. Our only show is that the cursed fool couldn't find his way back to the claims if he tried."

Hopper shook a mournful head. "Looks to me like California's a long ways away right now," he admitted.

THE three occupied their own little tent that night and all their gear but the canoe was handed them. That, as Haslam smoothly told them, had floated away.

Drake was thinking hard, Hopper was despondent, and Bull sulky, so that they had very little to say to each other. Later when Drake cautiously lifted the tent and peered out, he saw that there were two armed men on guard, and reluctantly lay down again.

By morning Haslam had apparently matured a plan of action. "Now, boys," he said briskly, "you struck a good lead. We ain't tryin' to do you out of anything, but we want to get in on it. We come a long ways an' we don't figure to go back with nothin' to show for it."

Drake waved his hand airily. "There's the whole country in front of you, gentle-

men. All you have to do is look. Heaps of good prospects. But we have to be on our way to register our own claims. We're obliged to you for your friendliness, and we wish you all kinds of good luck, but we can't stop."

"Can we let them go like that, Cheepy?" inquired Haslam of a short stout man with white eyelashes and puffed lids.

"We can not. We just can't bear to part with 'em so soon," replied Cheepy in a queer whistling voice.

"No," pursued Haslam with cold irony. "Maybe you didn't just get me, Frank. What I was sayin', we want to get in on this. We want you to come along an' show us so's we can stake claims, too, an' all go back together. D'you get me?"

"I get you, but I don't see it that way," said Drake evenly.

"Nor I don't neither. You can't bluff me," bellowed Bull.

"This here," said Haslam, "ain't no bluff. I know better'n to try an' run a bluff on a hard case like you. There's eight men got you covered, an' tough as you are you can't buck that."

Bull's florid face blanched, but Haslam's tribute to his hardihood saved his vanity. "Well now, it's mighty lucky for you that you have got eight men to back you," he grumbled.

"I wouldn't even try to stack up against you single-handed," pursued siren-tongued Haslam. "But now you see how things are, an' you're the feller to take your medicine like a man, ain't you? An' you're goin' to let us in on this."

"Well, I suppose I'll have to," admitted Bull.

"Not much use me sayin' anything," remarked Drake, still pleasantly smiling. "Here's my gun." He handed over his rifle, but said nothing about the pistol hanging in its holster under his left arm inside his shirt.

They took Hopper's rifle from him unresisted, and Bull handed his with a flourish to Haslam.

"Now this here's just a precaution," said the latter smoothly. "With a man as smart an' dangerous as what you are we can't take chances. But just as soon as them claims is staked an' we start back, why, you get your gun again. No hard feelin's, eh? It took the whole nine of us to handle you."

Bull had quite recovered himself. He stared around haughtily. "Begad," he said, "if I had a notion to start in right now even it'd take the whole nine of you to handle me."

"I guess it would, all right," agreed Haslam admiringly.

The gang made up packs of food and blankets, struck and cached the tents and stores, and with Hopper for pilot set out for the lode. Each one marched about as he pleased, but Haslam kept Bull by his side and Drake saw that Kirke and Melun were keeping a close watch upon him.

Their way led across a country planed and rounded by glacial ice ages ago, but the ground was strewn with fragments of rock and seamed with innumerable lakes, ponds and watercourses. The weather was bright and hot as it often is in midsummer in the sub-arctic.

Drake had much to think about as he tramped along. There was no faith to be placed in Haslam, and his associates to a man looked as if they would have been more at home in jail.

He himself could probably escape, but that would mean abandoning Hopper and Bull. And yet it would be difficult to rescue them. Hopper's mental and physical powers were failing, and there was a timid and hopeless air about him. And Bull, liberally smeared with flattery, was prepared to consider Haslam far more his friend than Drake.

There was one other possible avenue to freedom. In any body of men there are always actual or latent antagonisms, potential lines of cleavage. Drake knew Haslam's personal followers to be Kirke, Melun, Gaffy and Poke, of whom only Kirke and Melun were dangerous. The four others were strangers.

The man called Cheepy, like some prowling tiger, had two ragged and disreputable jackals in attendance. and the three kept together, though Haslam treated Cheepy with deference.

There was one solitary individual

named Reich, a big stoop-shouldered man with a hanging lower lip and a sullen expression. He seemed to have no friends at all, lurching along with dangling hands, and eyes fixed on the ground.

Drake fell into step beside him. "Goin' to make a big stake this trip?" he inquired presently.

Reich surveyed him with somber eyes. "Not if these here coyotes can gyp me out of it."

"Why, ain't they good friends of yours?"

Reich snorted "Good friends! Now, see here, let me tell you. Does this look like they're good friends? Whose canoe are they usin'? It's mine, ain't it? An' my tent. An' didn't Haslam promise me a third share? Yes, sir. An' wouldn't you think I'd have some importance around here? Wouldn't you think that what I'd say around here'd pretty near go, eh?"

"Well, it certainly should," agreed Drake solemnly.

"Well, it don't. No, sir, not a damn' bit. As soon as they get my stuff, well, I can go to hell. An' I ain't. They think they can get away with it. Now I tell you they got another think comin'."

Reich was plainly suffering severely from suppressed conversation. For hours he expatiated almost without drawing breath on his wrongs. Drake listened with marvelous patience for there were other things he wanted to know.

It appeared that the party had come up the river in two canoes. "Who does the other canoe belong to?" he asked.

"Cheepy, I guess," replied Reich with indifference. "He ain't no better'n the rest. But now, listen to me." And so on without beginning, middle or end.

So that accounted for Cheepy, who did not appear the sort of man to step aside for anyone else's profit.

They camped that evening by the side of a little stream where there were some willows for fuel, and Drake sat down beside Cheepy. Haslam watched them across the fire, but seemed not to be able to make up his mind to interfere.

Drake felt that with such a man the direct approach was the best.

"Say, how many claims can be staked on an outcrop about a couple of thousand feet long? How much is there likely to be in it for twelve men?" he asked conversationally.

Cheepy's puckered lids closed until his eyes almost disappeared, and he pursed up his thick lips as if about to whistle. "I wonder," he replied.

"Haslam figures that there aren't going to be twelve men in on it," said Drake.

Cheepy considered the statement in silence for a moment. "Got a suspicious disposition, ain't you?" he suggested.

"I know Haslam, and if you're wise you won't trust him very far."

Cheepy nodded thoughtfully, but refused to commit himself.

"Think it over," advised Drake, and withdrew, not satisfied with the success of his attempt, but hopeful.

They tramped all the following day across the unending barrens under a blue sky and a hot low sun. Reich had taken Drake to his garrulous heart, but Drake's hope of drawing him into a confederation with Cheepy and his jackals gradually faded.

Cheepy drew off, evidently bent on playing a lone hand. Drake had achieved his purpose in disrupting the band, but he could not see that he had advanced his own interests. Reich was a broken reed, and no more to be trusted than Haslam.

By nightfall his spirits had fallen to a point where his only comfort was the feel of the pistol holster under his left arm. That something of a very sinister nature was passing in the minds of the various members of the gang was apparent to a far less keen observer.

He could not talk to Bull while in Haslam's company, and Melun or Kirke were always at hand when he tried to get a word with Hopper. But he managed to talk with the old man that evening.

"How'd you feel like making a break for it, Uncle?"

"My laigs wouldn't hold out, Frank. I'm too old—can't run no more. They'd catch me sure."

"There'll be shooting soon, sure as blazes."

"I'm scared, Frank, that's just what there will be."

"Well, listen Uncle. This is the only thing I see for it. Come up to the claim from the southeast. Don't stop, but keep right on into the willows and go to grass. Don't stir. Lie low and wait for the smoke to clear. Will you do that?"

"All right, Frank, but I don't think it'll do much good. Californy's a long ways away."

Haslam stood over them smiling but cold-eyed. "Cookin' up any little scheme?" he said softly. "It wouldn't be healthy for you to try any shenanigan, you know. I'm tellin' you for your own good."

"We wouldn't have much show to put anything over, would we, when you have our great, tough, fighting man eating out of your hand?" laughed Drake.

Haslam chuckled silently and sat down on the other side of Hopper. Drake had no further opportunity of speaking privately to the old man, and could only hope that he would remember to follow his advice when the crisis came.

On the last day's march the gang manifested strong nervous tension. Drake saw Haslam and Cheepy in conference, and felt a sinking of the heart. If the two arch rogues worked in concert, the fate of the three prisoners was sealed.

They had evidently come to some agreement, for the order of the march was changed. They no longer rambled along each man as he pleased, but took regular stations. Hopper remained alone in advance, then came Haslam with Bull. Kirke and Melun followed, and Drake found himself paired with Reich, Gaffy and Poke bringing up the rear.

Cheepy and his jackals formed a flying column fifty feet on the left flank. Each of the prisoners, therefore, could be covered by several guns at all times.

Drake felt a strong suspicion that Reich had also been marked for whatever fate was to befall the prisoners, but he could only warn him vaguely. "Watch out for yourself. There's likely to be trouble any minute, and Haslam's got it in for you."

"I can take care of myself," replied Reich sulkily.

Drake pressed his elbow against the pistol holster. He did not expect to be alive very long now, but he was grimly determined that other ghosts should accompany him to the land of shadows.

DRAKE began to pick up landmarks. They were approaching the vein. What did Haslam intend to do? What was in Cheepy's devious mind? Would Hopper follow his advice?

There came into view a narrow valley in the center of which a thicket of stunted willows surrounding a little pool of sky-blue water.

Drake was glad that the old man had remembered his directions and held straight for the willows, leaving the gold reef on his right. He tugged at Reich's elbow.

"Come over here and I'll show you," he said.

The maneuver increased his distance from Cheepy and masked his fire by the interposition of Kirke and Melun. Drake's right hand was in the bosom of his shirt.

"What's the matter?" asked Reich, stoping to stare.

At that moment Haslam caught sight of the discovery stake, conspicuous on its little mound of stones, and shouted, "Say!"

"Run, Uncle!" shouted Drake, and pulled out his pistol.

The old man put down his head and dived for the willows. Several things happened simultaneously. Haslam coldbloodedly shot Bull in the back at arm's length. Bull turned amazed eyes upon him, coughed, and went over slowly on his side.

The jackals fired at Hopper and missed, and he plunged safely under cover.

Drake shot Kirke through the body as he flung up his rifle to fire, and sprang sideways into a cleft between two rocks.

Reich's slow brain, taken unawares, would not act. He swung his rifle aimlessly and fired at Haslam, and Melun shot him at close range.

Drake, exchanging shots with Melun from cover, and painfully aware that some one was shooting at him from the

rear, was relieved to hear a scream from that direction and the noise of a man threshing about in agony.

He turned his head and saw Poke rush out of sight over the skyline.

As suddenly as the shooting had begun there was silence, broken only by the screams of Gaffy.

Drake was glad to crouch down and regain his breath and reload his pistol. He was unhurt, though there was a scratch on his ear from a chip of stone. For the moment he was safe now that Gaffy and Poke were no longer in his rear, but his situation was precarious.

Cheepy and his jackals were somewhere under cover across the valley a few hundred feet away. Melun and Haslam were in front of him and still closer. There were a number of loose masses of rock lower down the gentle slope but there was no cover whatever in any other direction, and if Poke should take it into his head to snipe him from the crest of the ridge his fate was sealed.

Cheepy's gang must be credited with the shooting of Gaffy; but what were Cheepy's sentiments towards himself? Hopper had apparently escaped into the willows, but the old man was unarmed; and as for poor Bull, he was lying motionless on his face across a bare ledge of rock in plain view.

The best thing for the moment seemed to be to lie still and try to delude the others into the belief that he had been eliminated.

There was silence for a few minutes, and then, apparently, Haslam or Melun attempted to shift his position for there came an outburst of firing from a low rocky ledge on the opposite slope, replied to from the huddle of rocks and stunted willows in front of Drake.

That, at least, was good. Cheepy was fighting Haslam openly with a preponderance of forces. Drake began to feel his spirits rising, and hoped that Hopper was safe and snug in his covert.

Outward peace descended on the battlefield. Gaffy's cries died out in silence, but somebody, Kirke or Reich, groaned at regular intervals close at hand.

A cloud came up from the northwest, bringing with it a flurry of sleet and a sudden chill. Drake shivered, but sucked his wet sleeve and was glad of the moisture on his parched tongue.

At intervals there was desultory firing in none of which he joined. It would serve his purpose best if Cheepy and Haslam killed each other off, for he would probably have to fight the survivors.

Slowly the sun sank in a long slant into a cloudbank. The sky overhead was misty and the light began to fade. Drake was cold and hungry and cramped from lying so long in one position.There had been complete silence on both sides for more than an hour. Everybody was waiting for the darkness and the comparative freedom of movement it would give.

An inch at a time Drake began to back away. In the dim light it was not likely that he would be seen across the valley, and he kept a willow bush between himself and Haslam and Melun.

As last he brought up beside Gaffy. Gaffy was dead and getting cold. Lying flat by his side Drake went through his pockets for cartridges and found nine, and also a piece of bannock which he ate thankfully.

With the dead man's rifle tucked under him he crept away. A breathless, long-drawn-out crawl over naked rock and he slid cautiously over the top of the ridge. Poke was not in evidence, so therefore he was safe. He had only to find Hopper and they could break back to the canoes together. Haslam and Cheepy might settle their differences in their own way.

But where was Hopper? Was he dead or alive? The sky was clearing and a pearly twilight reigned. In less than two hours it would be broad daylight again. He would have to get in touch with the old man before dawn.

Bent double and moving with great caution he moved northward under cover of the ridge, his ear strained for every sound.

A flitting, squeaking nighthawk shot by him with a whirr of wings. He started and his foot slipped on a loose stone which fell with a clatter.

He dropped flat and listened. Was that a man moving? No, only another nighthawk drifting like a ghost over the ridge.

He got up again. And suddenly a rifle was poked out in his face from behind a rock. He had just time to fire from the hip. Flame and smoke blinded him. The whole side of his face seemed scorched away. There was a crackle of firing and bullets whipped by.

He reeled back and sat down hard. His head was whirling. The firing ceased. Nothing moved. His head cleared and he got down and inched himself forward, finger on trigger, until he could look around the rock.

Melun lay there on his back with a gaping wound in his face. Drake put his hand to his own face and brought it away dripping blood. Melun's bullet had scored his cheek to the bone and he was almost blind in the right eye.

But he had no time to attend to his hurts. Cheepy, a bold and resolute man, but no strategist, thought the moment opportune for a rush. He and his jackals rose from behind their ledge and charged across the open.

Drake wondered why Haslam did not fire. Had Haslam been killed too, and had he to face Cheepy single-handed?

His answer was the staccato rattle of a heavy automatic. Cheepy dropped on hands and knees, tried to rise and fell flat.

His jackals promptly flung up their hands. "Don't shoot! We give up!" shouted one. "We give up, we give up!" echoed the other.

"Keep them hands up and come on over here," came Haslam's voice, calm and unruffled. "I won't hurt you."

Drake slid his rifle forward and tried to locate his enemy. But the light was too dim and Haslam too cunning.

The jackals approached reluctantly. "Keep on goin'," ordered Haslam; "I'm coverin' you."

They were midway between Haslam and Drake when Haslam commanded: "Stop where you are, you two. Is that Melun up there?"

"He's up here, but he isn't saying much now," said Drake grimly.

"Oh, so you're alive, are you?" was Haslam's cool response. "Too bad. But wait a little and I'll attend to you."

There was a subdued rattle of loose stones. Drake tried to see what was happening, but his sore eye obscured his vision, and the jackals were between him and his enemy.

"Now I'm in better shape to talk to you," came Haslam's voice again. "What d'you want done with these two stiffs?"

"We surrendered," wailed one of the jackals. "You promised you wouldn't hurt us," whimpered the other.

"They can go for all me," said Drake, "I got nothin' against 'em."

"Yes, but listen," said Haslam persuasively. "The rest is all croaked, or if they ain't we can croak 'em. There's just these two. If we let 'em go they'll squeal. Let's just bump 'em off, eh, an' share up?"

The jackals broke into babbling pleas for mercy.

"Shut up," rapped Haslam, "or I'll croak you right now. What say to my proposition, Frank?"

"I say that anybody who'd trust you deserved what he got. Let these two poor swipes go and I'll shoot it out with you."

Haslam's answer was characteristic. His automatic cracked. One of the jackals dropped without a sound and the other sprang away with a shriek. Another shot and he spread out arms and legs with another shriek and fell sprawling.

Drake tried a snap shot at the flash of Haslam's pistol, but missed.

"That's that," said Haslam's passionless voice. "There's just me an' you now an' only one of us is goin' away from here."

"You said it," replied Drake between clenched teeth.

His eye had stopped watering, and though his cheek was very painful and his head aching, he was filled with a flaming determination to rid the world of this cold-blooded killer.

He fired. The answer came like an echo. One could take no chances with a man who shot as close as that.

His position was not really tenable. He was lying flat on bare rock, and only his

elevation above Haslam gave him any cover at all. He put down his rifle as too clumsy for fast shooting and took out his pistol again.

He backed away, his movements expedited by two more bullets. A rock to his right seemed to offer a flanking shot at Haslam's position. He gained it safely after a slight detour, but found he had lost touch with his enemy.

There followed moments of breathless suspense, while with every sense strained to the utmost, he waited for some sign of Haslam.

And Haslam rose up not ten feet away in an unexpected direction. But he was the flicker of an eyelash too slow, and even as his finger pressed the trigger, Drake's bullet entered his heart.

Drake sat down, feeling sick and exhausted.

The dawn had come. He got shakily to his feet and called:

"Hopper, Uncle. Hey, are you alive?"

A weak and quavering voice answered him, and the old man crept timidly out of the willows.

Haslam, Melun, Gaffy and one of the jackals were dead; Kirke and Bull were still breathing, but their end was not far off. Cheepy, shot through lung and shoulder, was past help in the absence of medical skill and appliances. A bullet had chipped Reich's thick skull, but he was far from being dead, and the other jackal had only a bullet through the thigh. As for Poke, he had disappeared into the blue.

They did what they could for the wounded, and ate; and Reich avowing himself able to travel, they made a stretcher of willow sticks and clothing for Cheepy, which Drake and Hopper carried between them, the wounded jackal limping along behind with an improvised crutch.

Cheepy lived twenty-four hours and died without speaking. They had to take the jackal, whose leg gave out, on the stretcher in his place. And at last all four arrived back at the canoes. They were in some anxiety lest Poke should arrive before them, but nothing was ever heard of him again and his bones probably lie somewhere out there on the barrens near the mine.

On their journey to civilization Reich suddenly became insane and had to be bound hand and foot, and before they could get him to a hospital, the jackal's wound developed gangrene, of which he died.

After the claims had been registered, Hopper hastened to his beloved California to die.

Drake alone survived to reap the rich profits of the mine that had been paid for with so much blood.

SILVER CANNON-BALLS

WHEN, some fifty years ago, that famous Nevada character, William M. (Bill) Stewart, mining man, attorney, and ex-senator, bought a bunch of mining properties in the Panamint district on the west edge of Death Valley, and started to operate, he found himself up against a hard proposition. The properties were in the bottom of a deep, narrow canyon of a region religiously side-stepped by sheriffs and marshals. Road-agents had been doing as they pleased and waxing fat. The Wells-Fargo couches refused even to stop here, and the very men from whom he had bought the properties lingered about, waiting for him to go ahead and open up and try to ship.

He did set up a mill and smelter—but what was the use in reducing the ore to bullion for that gang of lazy outlaws to grab at their convenience? "Old Bill" Stewart, however, was a man hard to down. He did go ahead, but instead of turning out the silver in bars he moulded it into huge balls weighing 750 pounds. The members of the gang saw, and objected. They made no bones about their business, but they called this a mighty low-down trick.

"After we had sold the mine to you, too!" Stewart laughed. "Why, help yourselves, boys. There it is." They tugged, and pried, and sweat, and swore. It was no go. No mule would stand for those solid balls, they didn't dare use a wagon, could not dispose of such cannon-balls anyway. And under their very noses the doughty Stewart freighted the stuff out, five balls to a freight-wagon, without even a guard!

HARDY MEETS HIS WATERLOO

By Glenn A. Connor

The sense of responsibility for law and order doesn't leave a sheriff as fast as he can remove the badge from his vest.

"LIMP" LANG, deputy, paused just outside the door of the sheriff's office, caught sight of his superior with his feet propped on top of his desk, his chair tilted back against the wall, and the most of his features obscured by a newspaper. Whatever it was that Sheriff Patton was reading it must have pleased him immensely. Audible chuckles were coming from behind the newspaper as Lang advanced into the room and seated himself upon the opposite side of the desk.

Limp scraped his feet, tapped restlessly upon the desk top with his fingers and cleared his throat. But Sheriff Patton neither made comment or looked up. He continued to read avidly, grinning like a Cheshire cat. Had he been more observant, he must have been made aware of his deputy's disturbed manner. Lang tried hard to catch his eye. Failing in this he shifted restlessly, and although the day was far from warm, he removed his hat and mopped at imaginary beads of sweat upon his forehead.

"I see by th' Wheatville News that Rant Hardy has drifted down intuh th' Nowood country," the Sheriff commented at last, without looking up. Satisfaction and relief were evident in his tone.

"Thasso!" grunted, or rather snorted Lang. Still Patton caught no hint of his perturbation.

"Yep. An' 'tween you an' me, Limp, I'm admittin' it takes a load off my conscience. Ever since that Vidy come here an' bought out th' ol' Drop-in Bar I been some worried Hardy 'ud take it in his head tuh drop in this way too. They say him an' Vidy used tuh be cronies. That blow he struck them cowmen over beyond Black Buttes was hittin' mighty close tuh our territory, an' I just about had my mind made up we was tuh be th' next victims."

Limp sprang to his feet and started nervously pacing the floor, his game foot scraping the floor with a grating sound that rasped upon the sheriff's nerves. He looked up for the first time, frowning irritably. "For th' love of Pete, what's eatin' on yuh, Limp? Go sit down till yuh get that hoof of yuhrs limbered up."

The only time Lang favored his game foot to such an extent was when he was unusually excited or disturbed. At any other time his limp was scarcely noticeable, a foot crushed in his youth by a falling horse.

But instead of sitting down Limp whirled and confronted his superior. He pointed a shaking, accusing finger at the

newspaper Patton still held clutched in his two hands. "Ding, that paper has passed out a heap of false information. Rant Hardy is down at Vidy's this very minute!"

Patton's chair struck the floor with a crash. For a moment all he could do was stare at his deputy. Had the situation been less grave and portentous, Lang would have been compelled to smile at the comical look of dismay that spread his superior's face. But Limp knew it was no laughing matter as his own perturbation gave evidence.

At last Patton managed to articulate, "What'n hell yuh talkin' about, Lang?"

"I mean I walked past th' Drop-in not more'n ten minutes ago an' if I didn't see Rant Hardy leanin' over th' bar drinkin' with Vidy I'll eat my plug pinto raw!"

Patton glared at the newspaper he had recently been reading with such evident enjoyment, glared at it as though he held it responsible for the present situation. He ripped it in two and stamped it under his feet with a bitter oath. Then he turned his consternated eyes upon his deputy.

"Limp, get busy an' round that feller up!"

It was Limp's turn to stare, which he did with the impression that he thought his ears must have deceived him. But the expression upon Patton's face assured him he had heard correctly. Slowly his hands raised to the badge that adorned the pocket of his shirt. He fondled it for a moment, hesitantly, flushed in some embarrassment, and tossed it upon the desk. Not until then did he speak, a marked defiance in his tone.

"That's my answer, Ding. It's struck me sudden like it ain't goin' tuh promote my health none tuh be seen with that ornament in th' future. Hardy 'pears tuh have a special aversion for sheriffs an' such like an' I'm resignin' any such distinction right now."

"Yuh're scairt!" sneered Patton, as Lang started for the outer door.

"Stiff!" Limp flung frankly back over his shoulder. "An' for th' same reason you are. A feller that makes no bones about bein' a outlaw an' cow-rustler ain't th' type of gent I want tuh mess around with. Hardy takes a heap of pride an' he sure backs her up!"

Patton glared at the blank doorway in indignation and dismay. Lang to quit him at such a time as this! He dropped back in his chair with a smothered groan. For a long time he stared at the opposite wall, unseeing and with no comprehensive thought.

For many years now Ding Patton had been a servant of the law, serving it faithfully and unfalteringly, first in the capacity of deputy under the iron rule of the stern and hard-headed "Smoke" Fischer, then for the past twelve years as sheriff himself. No one had ever questioned Ding Patton's nerve.

But he had grown old in the service; his eye less keen and his gun-hand lost much of its former cunning. The knowledge of these things sapped at his courage. Ten years back—or even five, he would have felt much less trepidation at the coming of Rant Hardy. But now——

Limp had spoken only too true of Hardy's reputation and character. He was the nemesis of every servant of the law. The facts spoke for themselves. Patton could call to mind the fate of a half dozen different sheriffs. There was no proof Hardy had killed them. But it was known he was working in the vicinity about the time they met their ends. There were other county records, the resignations of numerous sheriffs and their deputies when Hardy put in an appearance.

All this became common knowledge throughout the country; Hardy became a regular Gorgon, his name a bugaboo; hated and dreaded by every representative of law and order. News of his coming was the signal for chaos and disorganization and nine times out of ten he found no opposition in his raids upon the stockmen's herds. The sheriff that had the nerve to challenge his invasion was seldom able to raise a posse large enough to oppose him. So Hardy worked his will pretty much where ever he went, gained greater faith in his own invincibility, and lived wholly off the fat of the land to the cost of his victims.

Hardy had steered clear of White Crow Flats, of which Kimball was the county seat and Ding Patton the representative of law and order, up to this time. Just what their safeguard was must have been a mystery to many. The section was immensely rich; the range was one of the finest in the state where the cattle thrived fat the year round. And fat steers, be it known, were Hardy's particular meat.

Patton might have been able to give a reasonable explanation if asked. During the reign of Smoke Fischer the White Crow Flats district had been made an unhealthy range for the lawless element. Fischer wasted neither words nor efforts in arguments. He laid down the law when he entered office, and thereafter the man that broke it paid the full penalty. During his rule he was majesty and power of law and justice, and the lesson he taught spread wide and lingered long.

Thinking of Fischer he wondered what that grand old man would do in this case. Go out and meet Hardy, of course. That had been Fischer's method, his code. He recalled Fischer's parting words now the day he replaced him in office, and memory of them caused him to flush with shame: "Never send yuhr deputy out after a man, Ding, that yuh're a-scairt tuh go get yuhrself. Remember fear rules a coward. Go after him yuhrse'f even though yuh know he'll get yuh in th' end!"

"God, an' I would have sent Limp!"

As in a dream Patton rose slowly to his feet, walked over to the deer horns and took down his guns. Automatically he buckled them about his waist, snapped each in turn from its holster and spun the cylinder to see that every chamber was fully loaded.

Peace had long prevailed upon the White Crow Flats and Patton had grown stale from lack of practice on a quick draw. But he practiced it now, diligently for fifteen minutes. He found his hand clumsy and his arm stiff. "He'll get me," he groaned. "Hardy'll get me sure!" Patton had no confidence, no idea he would come out of the meeting alive. It was said Hardy had few equals on the draw, and his own draw was fearfully slow. He rubbed his right wrist that had already commenced to feel the strain of snapping the heavy forty-five from its holster. He tried rotating his hand to limber it up. But all that he might do was far from satisfying or adequate.

At last he shoved his gun back through sheer disgust and started toward the door. He decided he might as well have it over with now as later—there was nothing to be gained by delaying the issue. If he could get in one shot—a man might do that even after his own body had stopped a couple——

He hurried down the street with a peculiar sidelong gait. Unconsciously he had fallen into his habit of gun-fighting days. His eyes were keen and alert, sweeping the streets and every doorway with darting glances that missed nothing. He observed with something of a shock that the streets were markedly deserted.

Then two blocks down his eyes caught and glued upon a sign, "Drop-in Bar." His pace quickened while his eyes dropped to the doorway. Not a soul was visible, not a sound disturbed the sudden quiet that seemed to have fallen over the little cow-town.

But as he dived past Dave Harmore's barber shop a head protruded itself from the door. "By God, Ding's goin' after that rustler, Hardy!" ejaculated the barber, springing back. "Limp, I thought you said——"

"Yuh're crazy! I tell yuh Ding Patton is scairt tuh stick his nose out his office! Didn't he try tuh sluff that job off on me?"

"So you been tellin' us, but just th' same he's headin' straight for th' Drop-in!"

A lathered figure came bouncing out of the chair and to the door, unwilling to credit the barber's words. He caught a glimpse of Patton just before he disappear through the door of the Drop-in Bar. There could be no doubting the sheriff's purpose.

A wave of shame swept over Limp. The sight of Patton entering that saloon alone, without a doubt going to his death, made him feel like a traitor. And he had just been telling the gathering in the bar-

ber shop what had passed at the sheriff's office!

A moment later those within were amazed to see Lang burst out of the door and race up the street in the direction of the county jail, the barber's apron fluttering from his neck and his face still smeared with lather.

He dashed into the office and took a hasty look around. The first thing he noticed was the two six-shooters missing from the deer horns. "Ding means business! Poor old fool—he's goin' tuh his death as sure as sin—an' it's my fault!" He ripped open a desk drawer and jerked out the holstered gun he found there. With frantic fingers he fastened it about his waist. The apron he tore from his neck with an impatient curse and started toward the door.

But at the door he suddenly recalled something and paused. He sprang back to the desk, snatched up the deputy's badge that still lay there and pinned it back upon the pocket of his shirt. Somehow its presence filled him with a savage joy, a wild exultation. Once more he was a representative of the law, faithful to its code. His inexplicable sense of loss a short time ago was gone. He dashed out of the door and back down the street in the direction of the Drop-in Bar, his face flaming with the flush of battle.

PATTON paused a tense second just outside the swinging doors, straining his ears for some suspicious sound, but all that he heard was a mumble of voices evidently issuing from somewhere at the back part of the saloon. Followers of Hardy's? It had the aspect of entering a hornet's nest. For a moment he felt a qualm, almost a panic, then with an obstinate gesture he pushed the swinging doors wide and stepped inside.

His eyes took in the room's occupants in a quick, sweeping glance. At the rear three men were congregated about one of the card tables, so engrossed in their game they evidently failed to notice his arrival. Another man sat in a chair tilted against the opposite wall, his hat pulled low over his eyes, evidently asleep. The only other occupant was Vidy behind the bar, his back toward the door.

It was on this latter that Patton last let his eyes fall, and cling. He let the doors gently back in place and advanced quietly to the upper end of the bar. Down the bar he slid until he stood within four feet of Vidy. To all appearances not one in the saloon had noted his presence.

"Oh, Vidy," he called softly.

Vidy started and whirled about. There was no pretense in his surprise. He stared at Patton as though unable to believe his eyes. "Hey—what th' hell——" he commenced, when his eyes suddenly dropped to the bar and caught sight of the black bore of Patton's six-shooter just visible over the top. Patton had his back turned to the others in the saloon and thus concealed the gun from their sight should they happen to look his way.

"Just put th' soft pedal on yuhr conversation an' slide over this way, Vidy," he ordered in a scarcely audible tone.

"What d'yuh want, Sheriff?" demanded Vidy, after obeying Patton's request. There was a gleam in the old sheriff's eyes that impressed him to speak carefully.

"I want Hardy, Vidy!"

"Well, what's that got tuh do with yuh throwin' a gun on me?" Vidy gave him an injured look. "Hell, Ding, I ain't seen Rant since God knows when!"

"It ain't been so tolerable long, Vidy," came back Patton calmly. "Lang passed here not over an hour ago an' he seen Hardy takin' a drink over this very bar with yuh."

"Yuh been misinformed, Ding," retorted Vidy stubbornly. "Yuh don't see him around here now, do yuh?"

Patton did not argue the matter. He tried a different attack. "Vidy, I understand you an' Hardy used tuh be pretty thick?"

"I knowed Rant pretty well," he replied evasively, eyeing the sheriff steadily.

"What's th' matter—is Hardy losin' his nerve?" he demanded scornfully. "'Fraid tuh come out an' meet an old man who's lost most of his knack with a gun? Has he taken tuh crawlin' off in a hole somewhere when he sees a sheriff comin'?"

Vidy leaned tensely over the bar, his eyes narrowed to mere slits. "Is it that yuh've taken a sudden notion in yuhr head far a wooden overcoat, Patton? Yuh're a damn' fool tuh make talk like that, Sheriff—a man of yuhr age an' standin' should know better. Rant never run from no man!"

"But he's runnin' from me now, Vidy!" sneered Patton. "Oh, it's a slick game yuh're playin'—this pretendin' surprise when yuh saw me here an' all. I bet yuh knew my actions from th' very time I left my office!" Patton did not believe his words. He was purposely goading the saloonkeeper on.

"Does that mean yuh really got a hankerin' tuh face Hardy?" he demanded incredulously.

"Just tell me which way he went, Vidy, an' I'll go after him," retorted Patton with insulting coolness.

Vidy stepped back and regarded him in wonder. After a time he spoke, a new respect in his tone, "Yuh don't need tuh do that, Sheriff. Just go out in the street an' wait. I'll send Hardy out to you."

It was at this instant that Limp put in his appearance and a more startling or grotesque sight could not be imagined. The chalk-like aspect of his face where the lather had dried, the other visible parts of it above the lather glowed a dull, angry red, his eyes savagely a-glow, a six-shooter weaving weirdly in his hand—as Patton later expressed it, he was fit to scare the devil!

Vidy's eyes were the first to sight him and all he could do was stare and gape. Patton caught his vision in the mirror, and at the same time he established the identity of the apparition he caught a suspicious stir in the back part of the room. He looked again and caught a full vision of their faces in the mirror, saw they were strangers, and connected them at once with Hardy.

Patton whirled about and as he did so he brought his other gun into play. "Easy, gents,—reach for th' ceilin'." His voice was low but it carried distinctly to the other end of the room. For a tense second they hesitated. Then their hands raised slowly above their heads. There was no mistaking the three guns that confronted them.

"You, Vidy"—it was Limp that spoke this time—"just ease yuhr hands on top th' bar an' keep 'em there!" Then to the sheriff, "Yuh all right, Ding?"

"All right, Limp. Just sashay over there an' relieve them hombres of their hardware." After Limp signified he had pulled their teeth, Patton turned to Vidy. "Am I right or am I wrong—are these Hardy's men, Vidy?"

"No, sir, these fellers are innocent bystanders, Patton!"

"Thanks, Vidy, I thought they were Hardy's," he murmured dryly. "When yuh call Hardy out tell him he'll find 'em—an' me—up at th' county jail."

Limp came trooping up with their prisoners. "Where's Hardy?" he demanded.

The first thing Patton's eyes caught was the gleam of the deputy's retrieved star. His eyes filled with a glad light, he seemed suddenly transformed into a new man, younger by years and surging with confidence. Lang's insurgency and desertion had cut him deep.

"He's hidin' out," chuckled Patton. "Limp, we got 'im goin'."

"Like hell! Rant'll come an' come a-shootin'! Yuh'll pay him dear for this outrage, Patton!" raved Vidy.

"Tell 'im I'll meet him—face tuh face, down by th' county jail—if he's got th' nerve." And with this parting insult he motioned Lang and his prisoners toward the door.

Out on the street he remarked to Lang, "Well, I see yuh've changed yuhr mind about resignin', Limp."

Limp flushed and walked along a short ways with downcast eyes. "It was just a joke, Ding," he muttered shamefacedly. "Honest, I wasn't in earnest. I just wanted tuh see what you would do."

Patton accepted his excuse with good-natured mien. If Limp had been in the wrong, so had he, and he had no excuse to offer.

"Well, yuh know what I done," he commented grimly. "I come down tuh meet Hardy, you followed like a good

deputy should, and between th' two of us we took in four of Hardy's dogs. *That* kinda turns th' joke on him, hey, Limp?" Patton chuckled whimsically.

Limp halted abruptly. Nor was there any answering grin upon his own features. His face was extremely grave. "Look here, Ding, are you aimin' tuh face Hardy?"

"Yuh heard what I told Vidy, Limp."

"I'm faster on th' trigger'n you—let me meet him."

Patton gave him an indignant glare. "Yuh forget, Lang, I was deputy for one of th' best an' fastest shootin' sheriffs this country ever knew," he reminded coldly. "I'd never dared make a crack like that tuh Smoke Fischer!"

Limp saw his face, now cold and set, and knew further argument was useless. He changed the subject abruptly. "I reckon you c'n haze these fellers on up tuh jail, Ding? I want tuh look around a bit."

Patton regarded him accusingly. "What yuh aimin' tuh do?"

"I saw a bunch of hosses tied out back an' I'm suspectin' they b'long tuh Hardy an' his gang. I want tuh look 'em over."

"All right, Limp. But remember—lay off of Hardy!"

"Oh, hell, if yuh're so plumb set on shootin' it out with him it ain't my place tuh deprive yuh of th' pleasure," snorted Lang, as he turned and hastened away. But once he was out of sight he let his anxiety have full sway, and started racking his brain for some way of saving Patton from inevitable disaster. He would never get an even break with Hardy, and with the latter's reputation for a quick draw and accurate shooting, Patton, his arm and wrist grown stiff from age, had not the ghost of a show.

A handicap—that was Patton's only show. Then he must find some way of handicapping Hardy. He reached the horses and knew at once they must belong to the rustlers. They were all swift, magnificent steeds, but one stood above the others with a distinction that made Lang decide at once he was Hardy's particular mount. Black as the blackest night, two hands higher than any of the rest, magnificent in his fire and power, it was just such a mount a leader would choose to ride.

But the deputy lost no time in admiration; Hardy might put in an appearance at most any moment. He approached the horse after some difficulty and wasted a minute in fumbling about the saddle. Then he started a hasty retreat.

And none too soon. He heard a roar as of a maddened bull and the slamming of the rear door of the saloon before he had gone a hundred feet. He paused at a convenient corner of a building to watch Hardy tear at his bridle reins and leap into the saddle. Hardy had scarcely touched the saddle horn when his horse was away like the wind. Lang speeded up an alley for a short cut to the jail.

Patton had disposed of his prisoners and had stepped to the outer door of his office when he heard the thunder of Hardy's approach. He leaped clear of the door and into the street, assuming a crouching position, a six-gun held ready in either hand.

A great crowd of spectators was pouring forth in the rear of the oncoming horseman, scurrying forward like a lot of curious children, unwilling to miss any of the action.

Patton saw a huge black object charging toward him as through a heavy mist. He swiped a desperate hand across his eyes to clear his vision. The object seemed to be bearing directly down upon him. The thunder of hoofs filled his ears. The terrible Hardy was here!

He tried to raise his guns to bear on the flying demon riding him down, but they had become suddenly fearfully heavy. He reeled to one side as a flash of flame leaped toward him. Something jerked at his side and whirled him half around.

But with that tearing sensation all emotion left him, his vision became suddenly cleared. His own guns came up with a jerk just as the big black whirled and started back. A demoniacal yell filled his ears. Again the horse was bearing down upon him. But Patton recklessly held his fire, waited until the horse was looming over him, then he sprang back.

Patton was vaguely conscious of a figure leaning toward him far out of the saddle, the gun in his hand weaving fantastically. Then, just as his guns spoke the figure seemed to leap toward him—did leap toward him—and fell in a convulsive heap at his feet.

Patton stared in bewilderment, uncomprehending. Still clamped between Hardy's legs was his saddle.

Limp came running up, his face the gray of ashes. "God—I was 'fraid—I hadn't cut that latigo—deep enough!" he panted.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

A SHERIFF IN PARADISE

A Book-Length Range Novel by
W. D. HOFFMAN

GUN-TOTERS OF THE STEEL TRAIL

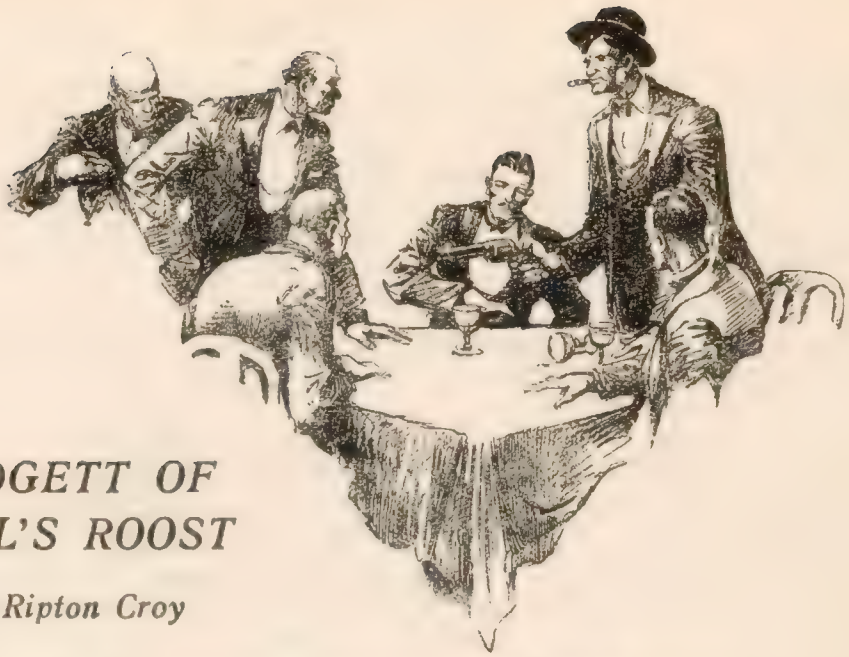
Beginning a New "Larry Ordway" Western Serial by
J. EDWARD LEITHEAD

STEP LIVELY, SON

A Thrilling Western Prizefight Gunman Yarn by
HOWARD SMILEY

THE ANCIENT LAW

A Dramatic Gambling Story by
ROBERT K. ROTH



PADGETT OF HELL'S ROOST

By Ripton Croy

"Cleanup" Jess Padgett, cowboy and two-gun artist, visits New York.

THE taxicab disappeared into the traffic of Broadway, and "Cleanup" Jess Padgett, late of Hell's Roost, Arizona, thought of all kinds of retorts to make to the sneering, thick-lipped driver. The trouble was that the retorts came to his mind a little too late to be applicable to the situation.

Broadway's lights winked, blinked and scintillated from the ornate fronts of theaters and the roofs of illuminated skyscrapers. The huge Paramount Building reared its thirty-nine stories in the midst of a silvery cloud of artificial brilliancy. Surface cars clanged, automobile horns howled, traffic policemen's whistles shrilled, and the hum of a subway express filtered up through a long grating in the pavement. Spielers for sight-seeing busses sounded their calls above the shuffle of Times Square's Saturday night crowd.

Taxicabs of all colors, shapes and condition of servitude shouldered each other out of the way in the mad rush for ten thousand destinations. And Cleanup Padgett, who had come East to seek new fields to conquer, settled his derby hat more firmly on his close-cropped head and muttered baleful things.

"Oughta let him know what was what. Oughta busted him one plumb on th' jaw, that's what. Oughta——"

Five hilarious youths, their arms about each other's shoulders, collided violently with the tall form of the Arizona cowboy. He reeled under the impact. The quintet weaved down the sidewalk, shouting drunken pleasantries at the outraged gentleman in the derby.

His hand made an instinctive movement toward his hip; then he remembered and desisted. There was no gun hanging there in its accustomed place. As a matter of fact, it reposed at the bottom of the leather suitcase he carried in his left hand.

"Yah!" yelled one of the youths, grinning at the cowboy over his shoulder.

"Yah yoreself!" retorted Padgett inadequately. He wanted to invite the hilarious one to go to a certain hot climate; but he didn't. Instead, he crossed the street, jostled and pushed by the throng, and presently found himself in front of a hotel entrance, presided over by a lordly individual in a long-tailed coat of sky-blue, with impressive brass buttons decorating it.

He registered for a room with bath and followed in the wake of a bell hop, who

conducted him to the fourteenth floor, threw open the door and two windows, fussed with the curtains, switched on an electric light and waited suggestively. The cowboy gave him a quarter.

"I s'pose that ain't enough," the cowboy remarked. "I s'pose yuh want twicet that much. Or maybe yuh'd rather have six bits, or a dollar."

"That's up to you," the bell hop told him, impudently. "If this is all you can afford, that's your business."

"That's th' way I figgered it," Padgett told him. "I jest got stung by one o' yore New York taxi drivers. He charged me five dollars fer drivin' me up here from the depot. *He* got away."

"I've got some change," the bell hop retorted acidly. "If you think a quarter's too much, I can give you back ten or fifteen cents."

"Keep it, son." Here in the hotel room, away from the jostling crowd, the cowboy from Hell's Roost felt a trifle more like himself. "Keep it. There's plenty more where that come from, provided I'm treated like a gent oughta be treated. That there cab driver, now——"

"Told you he never give change on Saturday nights, didn't he?"

"Yeah." Cleanup Padgett peered at the boy interestedly. "How'd yuh guess?"

"Tough-lookin' guy, wasn't he? With a mean eye an' thick lips, an' a voice like a fog horn with th' croup?"

"That's th' feller, shore enough."

"There's fifteen thousand like him in this man's town," declared the bell hop. "An' they're all tough babies when they can get away with it. Why didn't you call a cop?"

"Didn't see any."

The bell hop laughed unfeelingly. "Nobody ever does," he explained. "You'll find that out if you stay here long enough, mister. Next time you better have the right change, see? Then th' cab driver'll have to do th' cussin'."

The bell hop went out, slamming the door smartly behind him. The cowboy divested himself of his clothing, took a bath, shaved carefully and dressed up again in his unaccustomed store clothes. Back in Hell's Roost they had looked pretty good, he reflected. Here in New York he wasn't so sure. Besides, they were wrinkled and baggy with travel. He put on a clean shirt, a stiff white collar and the derby hat.

"Wish I had my Stetson," he thought wistfully. "Reckon that's one reason I feel so doggoned queer in this man's town. Can't anybody feel plumb comfortable in a hat like this. An' these shoes——"

He stared at his reflection in the full-length mirror that was fitted in the back of his bath-room door. What he saw was not prepossessing.

Tall and muscular, with the deep tan of twenty-five summers adorning his lean countenance, he looked distinctly awkward and ill at ease. Which was exactly the way he felt. The dashing erstwhile cowboy of the famed Lush Valley cattle ranch, who could shoot the three-cornered head off a desert rattler at a distance of twenty yards, was completely smothered in this urban habilaments. He looked painfully unnecessary.

He weighed his forty-four in his big hand, twirled its well-oiled cylinder and replaced it in the bottom of his suitcase, together with the boxes of shell he had brought with him. Sight of the weapon brought back to his mind's eye the scene at the ranch, four days before, when he started on the eventful journey that had landed him here. He had donned the store clothes to the accompaniment of a chorus of sarcastic remarks by his comrades.

"Which yuh shore look plumb purty," Wall-Eye Groves assured him gravely. "New York'll be stampeded shore enough when it sees *you* git off th' train."

"That hard hat, now," Silvers Jamison remarked, eyeing the startling headgear with critical gaze. "Didn't know Moe Milstein had anything like it in stock. Reckon New York'll stand fer such a thing as that?"

"Milstein says they're all th' style in New York," Cleanup retorted.

"Maybe," asserted Silvers, biting off a chew of plug tobacco and stowing it in his leathery cheek. "I ain't sayin' they ain't. Only yuh don't look jest right in it, Clean-

up. Yore head's built fer a two-gallon hat, 'stead of a thing like that. A pony of strong whiskey would fill it so full it'd slop over."

"It's big enough tuh cover Cleanup's head, anyhow," observed Curly Baker. "Which if it don't git all swelled up between here an' New York——"

"Don't worry about that. New York'll take all th' swellin' out o' Cleanup's head 'fore he's been there three minutes."

"What yuh aimin' tuh do with yore six-gun, Cleanup?"

"Aim tuh carry it," declared the badgered one shortly.

"Better not. Yuh'll git arrested."

"Can't nobody arrest *me* long's I got my smoke-rod handy."

"Is that so?" jeered Wall-Eye. "Shows what yuh know about New York, feller. Jest let th' sheriff or any of his deputies find a gun adornin' yore hip, ol'-timer, an' they'll send yuh tuh jail fer two or three years. Ain't they 'restin' gunmen all th' time an' sendin' 'em tuh Sing Sing?"

"I'll wear my cannon. Nobody's gonna stop me, either."

But with time for more leisurely thought on the train, Cleanup took off the firearm and stowed it away in his suitcase. The farther he penetrated into the land of the effete East, the more out of place it seemed.

Stetson hats, at first fairly plentiful, disappeared completely the other side of Chicago. He failed to see a single gun displayed after passing a given point considerably nearer Tuscon than he liked to think.

He was astonished and appalled at the evidences of massed population, from Kansas City on. The train was loaded. The streets of the cities were fairly alive with people, all hurrying and all intent upon their own affairs. The country roads were lined with speeding automobiles. Cleanup hadn't suspected that there were so many people in the world.

At the Grand Central Station in New York, the colored red cap had demanded, and received, a dollar for carrying the suitcase from the train to the Vanderbilt Avenue taxicab entrance. The tough-looking driver of the vehicle into which he was shoved had refused, jeeringly, to return any of the five-dollar bill Cleanup tendered him. His impudence was beyond belief. The cowboy stared at the gun in the suitcase and winced.

"He called me a hayseed!" he marveled. "Doggone him, I oughta busted him one fer luck. Why didn't I?"

He had occasion to marvel at his own timidity and inadequacy more than once during the ensuing three days. His next encounter occurred on a Sixth Avenue elevated train the following afternoon. He had taken it for the purpose of seeing the northern end of Manhattan. The train slid to a halt at the 173d Street station, and a raucous voice yelled:

"All out!"

The man from Hell's Roost, Arizona, approached the tough-looking guard at the tail end of the departing passengers.

"This th' end of th' line?"

The guard glared at him. His voice was like the croak of a frog, with the venom of a rattlesnake added for good measure. He eyed the baggy suit disdainfully.

"Come on—git off!" he snarled. "T'ink I got all day here?"

Cleanup got off with considerable alacrity. There had been real menace in the guard's tone. The gates slammed shut behind him before he fully realized what he had done. Then, belatedly, he demanded satisfaction.

"Open up that door an' I'll cave yore face in, feller!" he shouted. "Who d'yuh think you're talkin' to?"

But the train pulled away from the platform, the guard shouting unintelligible things at the cowboy, and the other passengers grinning at his discomfiture.

His hand went to his hip, and he swore at the vacancy he encountered there. Somebody justled him and his derby hat fell off, rolling ten feet along the platform. Nobody offered to retrieve it for him.

He picked it up and jammed it on his head so far his ears stuck out. The ensuing titter become general. His bronzed countenance flamed. He strode away, found a stairway and disappeared down it.

He walked fourteen blocks, found another elevated station, paid another nickel at the turnstile slot and boarded another train without knowing or caring where it was going.

At the corner of Forty-third and Fifth Avenue he waited forty minutes, while Fifth Avenue double-decked buses streamed past him endlessly. Some of the drivers stared at him superciliously when he held up his hand as a signal to stop. Others didn't even look at him. He finally caught a bus in the middle of the next block when it was compelled to stop at a traffic intersection.

"Where to?" snapped the khaki-clad conductor as the cowboy pushed a ten-cent piece into the slot.

"I dunno," he said truthfully. "What difference does it make, anyhow? Can't I go anywhere this thing goes?"

The conductor's hard features relaxed in a grin. His brogue betrayed his Emerald Isle origin.

"Sure ye kin," he said. "Only this bus don't go very far. It'll be another dime ye'll be payin' in a few minnits."

"I reckon I kin stand it." Since the conductor had betrayed the fact that he was a human being, the cowboy pushed his advantage. "What's th' reason I had tuh stand on a corner an hour and a half before I could git one of these contraptions tuh stop—an' then had tuh walk a block at that?"

"Search me. Maybe th' drivers didn't like yer face."

Which wasn't the real reason at all; but then, whoever heard of a New York transportation service man giving a real reason for anything? Cleanup had simply been standing on a non-stop corner.

The skyscrapers of Manhattan confused him. He took an elevator to the fifty-fourth floor of the Woolworth Building, and then, at the impatient command of a sharp-featured girl, crowded into a smaller, circular elevator for another forty feet or so to the observation gallery.

Doubtless there would have been an impressive view, save for the fact that thick mist obscured everything below.

On the canyonlike streets of the financial district he developed a lame neck from counting stories in the tall buildings on every hand. He found his way to Battery Park, baked in the sun and shivered in the cold wind that blew off the harbor. Every time he paused to look at anything a policeman ordered him, gruffly, to "move on."

In the Aquarium, warned by the placards to "Beware of Pickpockets," he viewed the strange-looking water denizens with one eye and two frowzy, sharp-faced individuals with the other, in the meantime keeping his hand ostentatiously in his trousers pocket where reposed his roll.

The sharp-faced individuals lounged about in his vicinity with elaborate unconcern. The cowboy decided that their countenances were the most abandoned and utterly vicious he had ever seen. He left the building conscious that he knew no more about fish than he had before he started for New York.

"This is a hell of a town," he muttered desperately. "I wish I was back home."

He could start back at any time, to be sure; but that would never do. He had come East to see something. Now that he was here, he would see it or bust in the attempt. New York couldn't bluff him out so soon.

THE fourth day he committed *lese majesty* by calling a bell boy and ordering a pitcher of ice water. The bell boy, who happened to be the same one who had conducted him to the room on the first night, eyed him disdainfully.

"Say," he observed, "where you been livin' all yer life? We don't serve ice water in this hotel."

"Don't, hey?" Padgett flushed. "Look here, son. I may be green, but I ain't that green. I've stayed at hotels before. You bring me that ice water, an' keep a civil tongue in yore head while you're doin' it."

The bell hop stared at him. Then, without a word, he opened the door of the bath room and grasped a faucet.

"You can read, can't you?" he said witheringly. "Read that."

Padgett read. "Ice water," the small medallion over the tap said. He gasped.

"Does that mean I kin have ice water

any time I want it, by jest turnin' that thing?"

"Don't mean anything else. We're up to date in New York, mister."

The cowboy gave him fifty cents. "Listen," he begged. "This town's got me buffaloed, son. Out where I come from I'm considered right smart of a man, savvy? But here it's different. I'm more like a jackrabbit bein' chased by a dog. I ain't used to it."

"That's what I thought," grinned the boy.

"I'm goin' back pretty soon. I've seen pretty near everything there is tuh see, I reckon."

"That might not be a bad hunch."

"I'm goin'——"

"Where you from?"

Cleanup Padgett drew himself up.

"I'm from Hell's Roost, Arizona," he said. "I ain't used to a town this size, son; but put me in th' middle of a hoss, with my six-gun ridin' high an' a decent rope hangin' under th' saddle, an' I'm different. Put a sombrero on my head instead of this dinky hard hat, an' some real, honest-tuh-goodness boots on my feet, with a pair o' jinglin' spurs tuh finish 'em off with, an'——"

The bell boy was staring at him with eyes that fairly popped.

"A—cowboy?" he gasped in his turn.

"Jest that," nodded Cleanup. "A fair-tuh-middlin' puncher, son, an' a good roper an' brander if I do say it myself. Likewise, I ain't exactly a slouch at breakin' a bad hoss, when I'm right. But this here town——"

The boy's expression of habitual impudence had completely disappeared. Stark respect now shone in his eyes. He advanced and laid a timid hand on the other's arm.

"Where's yer—yer chaps?" He pronounced it as if he were referring to human beings of the male persuasion. "An' yer spurs, an'—boots? An' cowboy hat?"

"Left 'em home. Couldn't wear 'em here, could I? Hoss breakers an' good hands with th' spinnin' rope don't seem much in demand in New York. That's why I'm goin' back."

"Aw, don't!" The bell hop had clearly undergone a metamorphosis. "I ain't ever seen a real cowboy before. I've seen a lot of 'em in th' pictures, but that ain't like th' real thing." He surveyed the tall form of Cleanup Padgett eagerly. "Say—been over to Teddy's place yet?"

"Never heard of him."

"*He's* a *she*," the bell hop corrected. "Runs a night club up on Fifty-third Street, see? Come from Colorado five years ago an' opened up in New York. Better go up there to-night. I'm off duty at eight, an' if you want me to, I'll take you up there. It's a swell joint, all right."

"Lemme git this straight," said the cowboy. "This Teddy comes from Colorado, yuh say. What part o' Colorado?"

"I don't know. But she used to be on a ranch out there. You know—a cowgirl. Sometimes she dresses like a cowgirl now. Everybody goes there."

A cowgirl in New York! Cleanup Padgett, from Hell's Roost, Arizona, felt a thrill traveling up and down his spine. His eyes ached for the sight of a sombrero. A cowgirl. . . .

"We'll go, son," he said suddenly. "I don't know this Teddy, an' never heard of her. But I'm dead willin' tuh git acquainted. Bet she's young an' purty, ain't she? With sparklin' eyes an' red cheeks, an' plenty o' white teeth in her head, an' hair hangin' in two braids down her back?"

"I guess she must be all of that," assented the boy. "Eight o'clock, then."

"I'll be waitin' fer yuh, son."

TEDDY'S place distinctly and most disappointedly did not come up to specifications, save to the non-discriminating eye of those whose acquaintance with the West was confined to what they could see in the moving pictures and the portraits drawn by certain fiction writers.

Cleanup Padgett from Hell's Roost, Arizona, entered the night club in the wake of his self-appointed conductor, and stared about.

It looked tame. There were tables scattered about, and lighted contraptions hanging from the ceilings all ablaze with

glass prisms. A cleared space of polished floor bore up a few couples going through the labored motions of dancing. At a far end of the room a jazz orchestra fiddled, blew and clanged out something that doubtless passed for music. But as for the much-advertised Teddy——

She moved among the tables, a distinctly synthetic cowgirl, and flashed a hard, gold-toothed smile upon her patrons. Even the artificial lights could not conceal the fact that she was old. Cosmetic-filled wrinkles radiated from the corners of her eyes, under which were dark pouches of flesh. She had two separate chins, with a third already starting.

Cleanup knew little about women, but he would have hazarded a stiff bet that the woman's gross form was held in by a non-yielding corset guaranteed to stand almost any strain. Her gown sparkled and scintillated in the rays of the lights. She moved ponderously.

There was only one thing about her that savered of the West that Cleanup knew—and for which he was homesick. That one thing was the wide-brimmed Stetson hat she wore. It looked doubly incongruous riding atop her bobbed, dyed hair.

The bell boy who answered, as Cleanup had discovered, to the name of Joe, crooked his finger at the lady. She came over to the table he and the cowboy had taken.

"Thought you might like to meet a real cowboy, Teddy," he said with the assurance of his kind. "Meet Mr. Cleanup Padgett, of Hell's Roost, Arizona."

The woman beamed a gold-toothed smile upon Cleanup. Her sharp glance missed no detail of his attire, from the derby hat he held in his hand to the patent leather shoes he wore so awkwardly. There was no mistaking the significance of his facial tan, upon which the air and smoke of New York had made scarcely an impression.

"Pleased to meet up with you," she sing-songed in a curiously metallic voice. The vernacular sat queerly upon her tongue. "When did you blow in, old-timer?"

"Few days ago," he answered.

"You don't look like a cowboy," she remarked. "Where's your—costume?"

"Left it to home."

"Well, cowboy, make yourself right at home here." She flashed the hard smile again. There was something incalculably greedy in her eyes and expression. She bent closer. "If you want anything to drink, say the word. We trust cowboys in here, savvy?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'll let you know."

He did want a drink. He thought he wanted it badly. To his homesick soul the sight and fragrance of good red liquor would be indescribably welcome. When a dark-skinned waiter approached and bent over the table, he spoke his mind.

"Th' lady"—jerking his head in the direction she had taken—"says I kin buy a drink in here. How about it?"

"Certainly, sir." The waiter winked. He didn't look exactly like a waiter. He looked more like a reformed burglar, with his reformation not so far in the past, at that. "What'll you have?"

The cowboy gave his order. Just as the bottle, glasses and siphon were placed on the table before him, a hand clapped him vociferously on the shoulder. He turned in astonishment, to find himself staring into the face of a grinning youth who was vaguely familiar.

"Knew you in spite of the clothes," the youth cried. He was one of a group of half a dozen young men, all in evening dress and all with flushed faces. "Don't you remember me? I met you at——"

"Shore I do, now," exclaimed Cleanup suddenly, rising to his feet. "You're 'Chicken' Boyd, ain't you?"

"Nobody else!" declared Chicken, giving the other a second resounding thwack on the shoulder. "Gentlemen," turning to his companions, "meet my friend, 'Cleanup' Jess Padgett, of Hell's Roost, Arizona."

The cowboy acknowledged the introduction with a wave of his hand. Mr. Boyd had been a visitor at the Lush Valley Ranch the previous summer, he recalled, as one of a contingent of "city folks" getting a taste of dude ranch life. He had never been particularly taken with Mr. Boyd, as a matter of fact; but to-night, in this strange environment, the youth's countenance was like a bright beacon

looming out of the fog of strange surroundings. Cleanup shoved his hard hat to the rear of his skull and grinned at the other.

"Sit down, you an' yore friends," he invited. "Have a drink. Have a lotta drinks. Everything's on me."

They sat down with a loud scraping of chairs. The bottle passed from hand to hand, while the hard-looking waiter hustled out a plethora of additional glasses and cracked ice. The contents of the bottle gurgled alluringly, and the siphon hissed. Mr. Padgett rumpled his hair and prepared to toss off his drink. Temporarily he was feeling more at home.

"Here's how, gents," he said.

They drank. Then they drank again. The bottle speedily gave up the ghost under the combined assault, and the cowboy grandly ordered another.

New York wasn't such a bad place, after all. What if tough taxicab drivers, subway and elevated guards, bus conductors and arrogant bell hops did fail to recognize the sterling worth of a gentleman from Hell's Roost, Arizona? They hadn't seen his true character; that's all. They had never beheld him clad in the picturesque regalia of the range, with lariat whirling gracefully and skillfully over his head, galloping in mad pursuit of a fractious steer. They had never witnessed his uncanny handling of a six-gun. They knew nothing of his prowess with both gun and fists. In New York he may have been a total loss; but in Hell's Roost, Arizona——

"Drink up, boys!" he directed. "Take a look at th' bottoms of yore glasses. This is my night tuh shine, New York or no New York."

He almost gave vent to his new-found enthusiasm in an enthusiastic "yip!" But he restrained himself. Mr. Boyd and his companions revealed a combined capacity for strong drink that might have aroused the cowboy's startled admiration at any other time. It took two waiters to keep them supplied with the liquid refreshment they required.

In the offing the lady called "Teddy" hovered, her hard eyes seldom leaving the table. The man from Hell's Roost several times pulled out a roll of bills and demanded his reckoning to date, as the self-appointed host of the evening.

Each time, at an almost imperceptible motion of the woman's head, the waiter assured him that no reckoning was yet in order. He restored the roll to his pocket and quaffed another drink.

"You wouldn't know this cowboy if you could see him dressed up in his own clothes," Mr. Boyd assured the others at one point. "He's a wow."

"Sure he is," vociferously acclaimed one of the youths, waving a lighted cigarette in the air. "Bet he can shoot the eyes out of a wolf with his own eyes shut."

"Bet he can ride a horse, too," shouted another. "Can't you?"

"Well," returned the cowboy modestly, "I ain't never seen th' hoss yet I couldn't fork. Some hosses is worse than others, though. I——"

"Ever kill any Indians?"

As a matter of fact, the only Indians of Cleanup's acquaintance were the remnants of a tribe of Piutes who lived in the mountains near the Lush Valley Ranch. They were peaceable to the point of innocuous desuetude save upon the infrequent occasions when they got hold of the kind of white man's whiskey appropriately named "fire water." Then, for the time being, they were transformed into howling demons, who had to be handled with pitchforks and other primitive weapons of defense.

Cleanup had never killed any Indians; but now, in the spotlight of the prominence Mr. Boyd had thrust upon him, he became pardonably mendacious.

"Have I ever killed any Injuns!" he echoed. "I should say I have. Hell, gents, out where I live yuh've *gotta* kill a dozen or so every so often, or they'll run plumb over yuh. Killin's th' only thing a wild Injun kin understand."

They expressed loud admiration of his prowess, drained more glasses in his honor, and mixed additional drinks. Cleanup had tasted better liquor in his time; but this was New York, he reflected. He could not afford to be particular. Besides, wasn't he with friends? And the acqui-

sition of friends was not to be despised in this teeming city of countless millions.

AS the evening wore on Cleanup was more and more engulfed in the general hilarity. Other tables had filled with merrymakers. Teddy was moving about from table to table, conferring with waiters, exchanging badinage with guests and occasionally sitting down for a few minutes for a social glass.

The orchestra blared and wailed, and the dancing went on intermittently. Cleanup didn't feel like dancing, and no one suggested it. His was strictly a stag party.

At midnight the hilarity was at its height. At one o'clock in the morning it was almost as high. By one-thirty a scarcely noticeable thinning of the crowd had taken place; and at two o'clock Cleanup's waiter leaned over his shoulder and spoke gutturally into his ear.

"Sorry, sir, but we've gotta close," he said. "New law." He winked. "We'll open up again in half an hour, though. Just wait outside if you like."

"Shore." Cleanup rose reluctantly. He was distinctly unsteady on his pins, he discovered. This New York night club liquor had a kick all right. He thrust his hand into his pocket.

"How much do I owe yuh?"

There was a general scuffle of reluctant preparations for departure all over the room. The orchestra had ceased playing. Mr. Chicken Boyd and his companions were likewise rising. The waiter handed Cleanup something on a small tray. It was, he discovered, a piece of paper containing figures.

He lifted the paper and brought his stare to a focus upon it. Then, with an apologetic grin, he handed it to Joe, the bell hop.

"Read that, will yuh, son? I must be drunk. It looks like——"

Joe scanned the paper alertly. He was perfectly sober.

"It says you owe six hundered and forty-two dollars an' sixty cents, mister," he said.

"What?"

"That's what it says."

Cleanup Padgett caught the edge of the table and shook his head to clear it of the fumes. Mr. Boyd and his companions were staring at him queerly. Cleanup received the impression that the grins on their faces, which up to now he had interpreted as bibulously friendly, had suddenly taken on the equality of ridicule.

He stared around the room. The crowd was thinning rapidly, making for the exits. Teddy, the smile gone from her face and leaving it naked in all its adamantine reality, was watching from a distance. A corps of waiters, thick-browed and lumpy-shouldered, had begun to draw in. A sinister threat permeated the atmosphere.

"Six hundred——"

Cleanup stepped back from the table and discovered that he could stand without weaving. The size of the bill had shocked him almost sober.

"Not on yore life!" he exclaimed hotly. "I may be a maverick in this town, but I ain't quite a dam' fool. Savvy?"

The suavity had suddenly gone from the waiter who looked like a reformed burglar. He didn't even look reformed now. He surveyed the recalcitrant guest out of eyes that smouldered wickedly under his heavy brows. The other waiters drew in closer.

"No?" he said softly. "Well, bo, you'll pay the bill, all nice an' pretty, or we'll call th' cops. See?"

"Call 'em!" shouted Cleanup. "Call in th' hull sheriff's office if yuh feel like it. I'd rot in jail a million years before I'd stand fer a holdup like this. Call in th' state militia if yuh want to. Call out th' United States army!"

He was growing more sober every second. He had an idea that the police would be the last thing this robbing outfit would care to have come on the scene; and in this he was right. The tough-looking waiter took a step toward him.

"Pay up," he growled, "an' pay up quick. There'll be no cops fer youse, see? We'll jest beat you up till yer own mother wouldn't know yuh. An' we'll git th' coin besides."

The issue was clearly drawn, the cowboy discovered. Faced by twenty waiters who looked like potential, if not actual,

murderers, gangsters and thugs, his way to the exits was blocked. The members of the orchestra were staring at the scene, their instruments halfway into their cases.

Teddy stood a safe distance away, like a general directing the plan of campaign. Chicken Boyd and his companions were looking a trifle scared; evidently they were not exactly enamored of the possibility of vicious manhandling of their late host. Likewise, it was equally evident that they knew better than to say anything, even had they been so inclined.

"Come across!" snarled the spokesman for the thugs. At a motion from him the others moved in more compactly than before. "Ante up, yuh cheap skate. We can't wait here all night."

A cheap skate!

At the epithet something suddenly snapped in the cowboy's brain. So he was a cheap skate, was he—Cleanup Jess Padgett, the freest spender in Hell's Roost, Arizona? They'd beat him up, would they—the man who was acknowledged to be the wildest and most courageous fighter between the Gila and the Rio Grande? They'd fix him so his own mother wouldn't know him, would they?

His hand went to his left breast, as though to still the wild beating of his heart. But Cleanup's heart wasn't beating wildly at all. His eyes had grown suddenly small, until they were mere slits; his nerves were like taut strings frozen in liquid air.

With a movement so lightning quick it was like the strike of a rattlesnake he ripped open his vest, jerked out a loaded Colt's revolver and covered the crowd of toughs with the unwavering muzzle.

But the toughs were quick also. A dozen of them dropped their right hands to the side pockets of their waiter's jackets. Instantly the Colt spat spitefully in a crackling shot, and one of the waiters, with an oath, seized his right wrist.

"I know what you coyotes have got in them pockets," the cowboy growled throatily. "There's five shots left in this forty-five. That means five dead hombres when I start fannin' in earnest. Anybody want tuh be first?"

Nobody did, apparently. There was that about the transformed guest that compelled conviction. For a full minute he held them; then the head waiter, who was, if possible, more tough in appearance than the others, spoke quietly.

"You've called the turn, mister," he said. "You've got us dead to rights. Put up your gat and beat it. You don't owe us anything."

There was a furtive expression in his eyes now that spoke of fear. They wanted to get rid of the unwelcome guest at any cost; it was easy to see that. Cleanup considered the gang.

"I reckon I owe something, all right," he snapped. "But I ain't takin' yore word fer anything any more, savvy?" He transferred his stare fleetingly to the bell boy who had brought him hither. "Son," he remarked, "I've got an idee th' sheriff would like th' chance tuh raid this joint. Now's his chance. Hunt up a phone, will yuh, an' call up th' sheriff's office. Tell 'em I'll hold this bunch o' road agents until they git here, if I have tuh let daylight through two or three of 'em."

"Yes, sir," said Joe with a vast respect, as he scuttled through the rigid mob in the direction of a distant telephone booth. From her vantage point, Teddy watched, fascinated. She made no move to block the boy's egress. There was that in the tense attitude of the man from Hell's Roost, Arizona, that warned her to be good.

When the police arrived a few minutes later, they were accompanied by a group of eager young men, some of them with flashlight cameras.

A DAPPER individual, breathing alertness and prosperity from every pore, had just wound up an eloquent peroration when there was a tap at the door, and Joe, the bell hop, entered. He carried a telegram.

"We'll pay you five hundred a week for the rest of the season," the dapper individual was saying persuasively. "Your act will be a riot, if I'm any judge. As the man who held up Teddy's night club at the point of a gun, Wild West fashion,

you'll bring the customers with a rush. Better accept, Mr. Padgett, while the offer's open."

But Mr. Padgett didn't appear in any hurry to accept the flattering offer. The dapper individual was a booking agent for a string of Eastern vaudeville theaters, most of them located in New York and environs.

"Five hundred a week isn't to be sneezed at," the booking agent added as the cowboy opened the telegram and perused it slowly. "It's positively my best offer. Better accept."

Cleanup looked and grinned.

"I'm right sorry, mister," he said, "but another party is makin' me a better one. I'm takin' th' next train West."

The booking agent, finding the prospect adamant against further argument, went away disappointed. Joe, the bell hop, so far forgot the rules of the hotel as to help his idol pack. The telegram had fallen to the floor unheeded. They took an elevator to the ground floor, and Joe called a taxicab. He handed the suitcase to the driver, and Cleanup handed Joe a half dollar tip.

"I've got a swell job now," he explained. "Take care of yoreself, an' if yuh ever come out to Arizona look me up."

"Yes, sir," Joe choked.

"Good-by, son."

"Goo'-by."

The taxi drove away, and Joe returned to his bench disconsolately. Adventure had come into his life and departed again. Something was crumpled up in his hand. It was the discarded telegram, which he had picked up mechanically. He smoothed it out now and read it.

This is what it said:

JESS PADGETT,
HOTEL STONEHAM,
NEW YORK CITY.

COME ON HOME BEFORE YOU RAISE ANY MORE HELL. BILL SHANKLIN QUIT LAST NIGHT SO YOU'RE NEW FOREMAN AT FIFTY A MONTH. WE START BRANDING NEXT WEEK, SO COME PRONTO. RIPTON.

CURIOUS MOVING MOUNTAIN

ABOUT twenty-five miles west of Glenwood Springs, Colo., is Rifle, the debarking point for Meeker and the big game country of the North River forty-two miles to the north.

The old days of the milling herds and the picturesque cowpunchers still live in Rifle. During the fall shipping season the road between Rifle and Meeker is alive with slowly moving thousands of "white faces" with tiny lost looking calves leaning drunkenly against their mothers, with dust clouds rising as a background to the river of cattle.

North of Rifle, between Garfield and Rio Blanco Counties, is the famous moving mountain. In the fall of 1911 this hill took it into its head to wander, probably influenced by the hordes of hunters, fishermen, campers and tourists that passed by, and calmly slid seventy-five feet across the beautiful new stage road. In March, 1925, the mountain shifted another one hundred yards in two days, again blocking the road to Meeker.

According to Julian D. Sears, of the United States geological survey, it is presumed that the moving mountains are but a form of landslip. The phenomenon has also been explained by the theory that subterranean water seepage causes a loosening of the clay in the mountains, which brings on the shift.

There are two other mountains which move, one in England and one in Switzerland, but Rifle and Meeker divide the honor of possessing the only mountain in the United States that suffers from wanderlust.

A RATTLER'S VICTIM

JACK DOOT, 30, of Yoakum, Texas, was seated on a log, skinning a squirrel he had shot when a rattlesnake struck him in the shoulder. He ran nearly a mile for aid, but died within an hour. His was the fourth death from a snake bite within a week reported to Colonel M. L. Crimmins, distributor of anti-crotalin serum, to whom many appeals for aid come every week.

GUNS OF THE GRASS HOG

By Clee Woods

Karney's saloon learns a new way of playing stud poker.

"AND there'll be four hundred more added to this when you turn the trick, cowboy."

Bob Ring stood with his tanned fingers half clasping the hundred dollars that had been thrust into them. His keen blue eyes only glanced down at the money, then came back to the swart, unshaven face of Brent Kirby, owner of the K Triangle. Ring had been working for Kirby only the past week, but what little he had come to suspect about the outfit in that time had not prepared him for the present surprise.

"Now let me git this straight, Mr. Kirby," he said. "To be plumb plain, yuh want me to put this fightin' old rancher and his boy outa the way, huh?"

"That's why I sent for you."

"And to be still plainer," stipulated Ring, "you want it done right off pronto, with six-guns, do yuh?"

"The quicker the better. I'm goin' to have this whole range, everything between Coyote Mountain and the Copper Flats. I've bought out or run out every little outfit except Taylor. Now he goes. Yeah, with six-guns and just as quick as you can draw a bead on him."

As Kirby finished, Ring slowly unfastened his worn gun belt and tossed aside his two guns. Kirby had just come out from his ranch-house and was unarmed. When he saw the cowboy stripping off his guns, wonderment came into his face.

"What's the idea?" he asked, somewhat disturbed.

"I'm goin' to whup hell outa yuh, Kirby. That's all."

"Don't be foolish," Kirby laughed ner-

vously. "We understand each other, and it's a good price."

"That's it, we understand each other awful damn well," gnashed Ring. "Now, yuh low-lifed coward, fight me like a man."

Ring advanced upon Kirby with quick, certain strides. The rancher's huge bulk was at least fifty pounds heavier than Ring's seventy inches of well-built manhood, but he gave ground a little, nevertheless, until he seemed to take reliance in his size. Then Ring sprang upon him with flying fists. For a moment they exchanged swift punches, until Ring shot a terrific right to his employer's chin. Kirby reeled backward and Ring landed another heavy blow that dropped him.

Without any ado at all, Ring pulled Kirby to his feet, let him get steady on them, then downed him again. Twice more he pulled the rancher up and knocked him down. The fourth time Kirby lay senseless and bleeding.

"Now try to hire me to do yore sneakin' killin', yuh dirty-hearted range grabber," panted Ring, when Kirby started coming to. "Jest because I've had to kill a few men in my time, some folks have put me down a killer. Well, I've never shot except when they made me, and it's dead certain no man is ever goin' to make me shoot for money. God, I wish—here," breaking off with an angry snort, "eat this damn stuff!"

Ring grabbed up the money he had cast aside and proceeded to jam it into Kirby's bleeding mouth. When Kirby coughed and choked on it, Ring got up and stood over him for the final avowal:

"I'm goin' now, but it ain't for far. I've heard old man Taylor wants a partner, and that's jest what I'm goin' to be. That's where yuh'll find me from now on, right over there in Cottonwood Canyon. And if yuh want to hire a killer, like yuh'd sized me up for, why don't yuh go git Pawface Bragg? Him and his sneak, Buck Smith, does it for two hundred and fifty dollars a head."

It was a ride of several hours to Cottonwood Canyon, where Taylor and his eighteen-year-old son, John, had been holding out against the grass greed of Kirby. Ring found the spunky old rancher suspicious of his story, and it took a detailed recital of all that had happened, along with a well filled money belt that Ring drew from his waist, to convince Taylor of his sincerity. The following day, in Burro Point, Taylor made a legal transfer of a one-third interest in the Diamond Circle Ranch.

The week that followed was quiet enough. Then, on the next Saturday night, Ring went into town again. Not that he cared for what the little cow town might offer in the way of games or drinking acquaintances, for his was a business trip. That is, if you can call it business when a man deliberately puts himself in the way of another hired to kill him.

Brent Kirby had taken him at his word, so the news was whispered about, and sent for Pawface Bragg. At any rate, Bragg was in Burro Point, and Ring meant to give him a chance to show his hand.

To that end, the two-gun cowboy strolled into Karney's saloon early that night and took a seat at a poker table in the rear of the room. He had to wait perhaps an hour before Kirby and several of his men came trooping into the room and on back to the card tables. Some of the men nodded pleasantly to Ring, for they had nothing personal against the likeable rider who had left them in a huff.

Then came Pawface Bragg, a squat, powerfully built man with a deep scar across his face said to have been made by the sweep of a bear's paw. Throughout the entire Southwest, Bragg was known as the most despicable of killers, a man who would shoot down another for a price. It had always been his boast that he gave his victims a chance, at least enough of a break to keep himself free of the toils of what little law there was in the country. And Bragg was fast on the draw; in fact so fast that only once had he been hit in a gun duel.

Pawface came over to Kirby with a genial laugh, went up to the bar for a drink with him, then turned to the rear of the room. Straight for Ring's table they came, Bragg and Kirby, with the swagger

of men that knew all eyes were on them.

"Here's a couple of empty seats, Pawface," said Kirby, not knowing that Ring had seen to it that the seats were vacated purposely.

"Yeah," winked Bragg, "let's have a hand, boys. Nothin' I like better'n a nice little sociable game of stud poker with friends."

In a moment the poker game started. So did the game of wits, for everybody in the room knew that Bragg was at Ring's table for the sole purpose of picking a fight. Ring played along as though his two enemies were no more dangerous than the other three nervous men at the table. Once he saw Bragg put the cards back the same way they had been before Kirby, at his right, made the cut.

Others saw it too, but they were disappointed if they expected Ring to challenge the cut. On Bragg's next deal Ring again saw him cheat, by dragging a card from the bottom of the deck. However, the cowboy let him keep dealing. Still another time Bragg pulled a card from the bottom, more clumsily than before.

Those who had the courage to stand about the table watching the unusual game, turned to wink or grin at each other as Ring merely turned down his hand and awaited the next deal. The cornered cowboy was afraid to call Bragg, those looks said. Twice more the deal went around, and even Kirby himself joined in the obvious cheating to provoke Ring to battle. The grins and winks about the table changed to looks of disgust or pity, according to how each onlooker felt toward the lone-hand stranger who let the two gunmen keep up their insulting tricks.

Then came Ring's turn to deal again. He held the pack in his left hand and ran the one-hand deal around with a dexterity that he had not displayed before. While the initial bets were being made on the first up cards, he sat hunched forward over the table, his denim blouse bulging out just a little and his right hand toying with his chips before him.

He called and raised heavily on a seven up. Two men dropped out, but Bragg and Kirby stayed. As Ring dealt the second up cards around, he kept turning his left hand over so that he could glimpse the next cards to be dealt.

"Hey, what yuh think this is," Bragg challenged promptly, "a peekaboo or a poker game?"

"I don't think—I know what it is," Ring answered coolly.

It seemed as though both Bragg and Kirby realized at the same instant that Ring's right hand had slipped into the bulge of his blouse. So much did they respect this advantage their enemy had suddenly gained that they held their own positions with cautious immobility, Bragg slightly reared back with his thumbs hooked in his vest holes and Kirby with his right hand hanging on the edge of the table.

"I reckon," Ring smiled, rising slowly, "that you boys wouldn't mind if I let yuh go on with yore nice little friendly game. Well, I ain't stoppin' yuh. Fact is, I'm makin' yuh play now, and fair too, damn yore dirty bluffin' hearts!"

As he spoke the last sentence, both of the cowboy's hands shot downward with startling swiftness, and flashed upward again with a long gun in each. The two big Colts were held squarely on the pair before they realized what had happened. Then, still smiling and keeping one gun levelled, Ring pulled back his jumper to disclose the fact that no gun had been there when the pair were duped by his ruse. Kirby bit at his lip in angry chagrin and Bragg swore audibly.

"Don't take it too hard now, my brave gunslingers," soothed Ring. "Jest go right on with the game, the friendlier the better. To show yuh my heart is in the right place, I'm goin' to help you two boys play yore hands. It's yore deal, Kirby. Bragg will cut—a honest cut too."

Ring stepped over behind the pair and poked a gun against the back of each. Without taking their weapons, he made them start the game. Kirby shuffled and dealt according to orders. Ring made him and Bragg pull their hole cards up far enough for him to see them too.

"We cain't stand on a trey and fimps, can we?" he decided for Kirby. "But,"

peering at Bragg's hole card, "that looks all right, so raise him two blue ones."

When Bragg hesitated, Ring punched the gun into his back somewhat ruthlessly and cocked it. At the click of the hammer, Bragg shoved in his chips as ordered, on a ten in the hole and jack up. The next deal showed a pair of kings in one hand. Bragg drew an eight. Ring made him check, raise the bet from the kings and then stand for the second raise. Bragg's fourth card was a queen. A pair of fives showed in the hand beside the one with kings up.

"We're goin' to stand, though, and try to belly in with that nine spot," Ring announced for his poker protégé.

"What the hell yuh think yuh're doin' with my money?" Bragg flared back over his shoulder.

"Better git reckless with yore money a little like yuh was with your life awhile ago, hombre," advised Ring, tapping him on the back of the head with the muzzle of a six-gun.

Bragg pushed in the chips, evidently concluding to bide his time. The killer's fifth card was an ace.

"Too bad," lamented the cowboy behind the unlucky one's back. "Mebbe better luck next time."

Thus for fifteen minutes Ring kept up the farce of playing the hands for the pair that had come in to shoot him down. The grinning trio of men, who had had nerve enough to stay in the game despite its gory prospects, were the richer by some hundred dollars apiece when Ring decided to quit plunging the money that he kept forcing Kirby to put up.

"You boys better go on home now," said Ring to the trio, "but don't be afraid Kirby or Bragg will take back yore winnin's the next time they meet yuh, for I'll shorely settle with 'em if they try it. My address is Cottonwood Canyon, gents, and I'll be home 'most any day *anybody* wants to find me."

With that, Ring went backing out of the saloon. Bragg and Kirby remained in their seats, with muttered curses and avowals that tricks wouldn't be able to win all the time.

QUIETUDE reigned in Cottonwood Canyon for the next six days. Ring and the Taylors, with two hired men, began throwing a fence across the lower end of the long canyon. A fence had been there before, but Kirby had torn it down after Taylor refused to sell to him.

On Saturday morning, Ring went to select a location for another fence, to match Kirby's move in flooding that part of the range with his cattle. When he returned to the fence building in the late forenoon, only the elder Taylor and the two hands were at work.

"A whole stream of cattle come up this way awhile ago," explained Taylor, "and John went to see if he couldn't run across the K Triangle riders that's pushin' them in."

"That boy's got no business hookin' up with them fellers," frowned Ring.

"Oh," Taylor laughed, "he didn't mean to do no fightin' much, else I'd been with 'im. He knows how you've got that Kirby outfit buffaloed, so he goes back to the house and puts on your new hat and the black sateen shirt you wore in the poker game. Then he forks your own private pinto. With you and him about the same size and build, at a distance they'll easy take him for you and go high-tailin' it for safer territory."

"Mebbe two'd be better than one if there is anybody snoopin' around on us," Ring decided. "You boys keep the fence goin'. I'll take a look across the ridges."

The new partner did not mention to Taylor his apprehension for John's safety, but as he rode away he resolved on a word of warning to the boy. Any time now the trouble might break, and Ring knew that it would be centered on himself rather than the Taylors.

Ring had not gone half a mile, however, before he heard the cry of a rifle over in the next canyon from him. He spurred up his horse and went racing over the low ridge and down through the scattering scrub cedar toward the creek. But he had not reached the trail, when he saw his own horse, which John had ridden, come trotting up the canyon, its head in the air in grave alarm.

A little farther down, Ring saw a black heap beside the trail. Somebody had shot John Taylor from ambush! The decoy clothing and horse had worked only too well.

The crumpled figure was so silent and still that Ring knew it was beyond all mortal need. Stopping by it only momentarily to cover the face from the sun, he sent his horse flying up the hillside. He kept bent low in the saddle, searching the ground as he rode. Soon his trained eye caught the sign of a horse's hoofs heading over into the next canyon. He followed the tracks until he saw the assassin had crossed over a hog-back ridge and turned down into a long canyon that wound off nearly in the opposite direction from the K Triangle.

Instantly Ring knew the man had taken this course to turn suspicion from the K Triangle if his horse's tracks were discovered. Farther down in the canyon so many horses had come and gone that it was impossible to trail the one the murderer had ridden. Ring went back to where he had last seen the tracks, and there got down on his knees to examine them carefully and minutely. Then he took a chance on his conviction and headed for the K Triangle Ranch. Two miles away from the enemy stronghold, he took up a position on top of a little point, from which he could watch the two trails that lead into the ranch headquarters from the direction of the Diamond Circle.

He had only some ten minutes to wait. Then he saw a lone rider come swinging down the upland half a mile away. When Ring cut across to head him off, the distant rider tried to dodge. But the cowboy was not to be denied, and shortly he raced down into a deep arroyo to cut off the man's further retreat. Ring was surprised to see that the fellow had not even taken the trouble to do away with the Winchester which now hung in a scabbard on the saddle.

"Looks like yuh're awful shy of strangers, Mr. Smith," Ring greeted.

The man stared at Ring as if he were seeing a ghost. Ring remembered seeing him in the saloon the night of the poker game. It was Buck Smith, partner of Bragg and the one who killed from ambush when Bragg failed to get his man.

"Funny how a feller can git up and ride after bein' bored through and through, yuh're thinkin', huh?" Ring shot at the astonished man.

"What—what do you mean?" stammered Smith.

"Mebbe it makes no difference, hombre. Git off and fight me, for I'm goin' to kill yuh!"

"Kill me? I ain't done nothin'."

"Yuh'll never do anything more anyhow. Roll off, I said, and start shootin' when yuh're ready."

Smith had turned pale. No man, even if he had never seen the two-gun cowboy flash his weapons into action, could ever look into the dark face and piercing eyes that Bob Ring now presented, without knowing that it was a serious time. And especially a man like Buck Smith could not face Ring without terror gripping at his heart.

"But I tell yuh, Ring," jabbered the scoundrel, "I ain't goin' to fight when I ain't done nothin'."

"Shut up before I blow yuh outa that saddle. You shot John Taylor down in cold blood, thinkin' it was me, but now here I am to impress the difference on yuh with hot lead. Buck Smith," and Ring's voice was as cold and deadly as the black scowl on his face, "yuh'll never shoot another man from behind a bush. Yuh'll be dead in another minute."

Ring sprang lightly from his horse and stepped off to one side, where, though still glancing at Smith, he examined the hoofprints of his horse. The tracks were all the proof Ring needed.

"Wait a minute!" cried Smith in trembling fear. "Why don't you go after Bragg and Kirby? They're the ones after you."

"And who were you after when yuh shot John Taylor down?" thundered Ring.

Without more ado, Ring strode up, seized the cringing Smith by the arm, and jerked him from his horse. Again the cowboy stepped off and ordered the sneaking killer to stand up and fight fair for

once. But there was no fair fight in Smith and he remained on his knees on the ground, pleading in hurried, chattering words for his life.

"Well," Ring had to admit, "I cain't shoot a whimperin' coyote like you, but yuh'll pay for all yuh've done, Smith, on the gallows if the men around here ever let yuh git that far. Who sent yuh out here, Kirby or Bragg?"

"Both," declared Smith, eager to tell everything rather than hear Ring talk of shooting. "They was to stay in Karney's saloon all afternoon, so's no blame would be on them. I left two days ago, like Bragg and me had had a big fuss, and have been hidin' out at the K Triangle ever since."

"So simple it didn't work," scoffed Ring. "Git yerself up across yore saddle, Smith, head and feet hangin' down. I'm goin' to use yuh if I don't kill yuh."

In a short time Ring had strapped Smith across the killer's horse. As he worked he made the man tell all he knew. Then he got into his own saddle and went riding toward Burro Point, with Smith in tow. They rode around the K Triangle and avoided the main road as long as possible. It was close to four o'clock when Ring trotted into town with his strange charge.

First he stopped in the Mexican quarter and, with liberal bestowal of gold and promise of more, he got seven or eight men to agree to hurry up to a vacant hilltop just outside of town, with picks and shovels a-plenty.

"Hey," wailed Buck Smith, "are you sendin' them to dig graves?"

"Never mind what they're goin' to dig. You jest keep yore seat and take things as they come to yuh."

Then Ring hurried on toward Karney's saloon, before the news of his arrival spread before him. In front of the saloon he left his own horse, seized Smith's horse by the tail and, with his quirt, went driving it straight for the open saloon door. His actions were so sudden that he was heading the horse in through the door before Karney's customers were aware of what was happening. But when the men saw who it was and how he had come, they scampered here and there for cover.

For Brent Kirby and Pawface Bragg were in the place, left standing alone in the rear of the room. Ring swung the snorting horse about in order that everybody might see the terrified face of Buck Smith. As he did so, Pawface said something in a low voice to Kirby and looked at him expectantly.

But if he expected Kirby to join him in a concerted gun fight on Ring, he was to be disappointed. The big rancher only shifted his eyes from Bragg to Ring and stood his ground uneasily.

"Fellers," cried Ring, keeping his eyes on his two enemies, "on this horse here is a low-down skunk that has killed God only knows how many men from behind rocks and bushes. To-day I caught him jest after he'd shot John Taylor down in cold blood, thinkin' it was me.

"I'm goin' to turn him over to yuh, boys, to do whatever yuh see fit, but there stand the two devils that sent Smith out to do the dirty work. I'm goin' to settle with both of them, personal." Ring stepped forward, his thumbs hooked easily behind his hip bones, and stopped, facing Bragg and Kirby.

"We've *got* to kill him, Kirby," said the shrewd Bragg under his breath. "The fool means business."

"Anyway," warned Ring, "yuh've got to *try* to kill me, and do it fair. I don't——" He was cut short in the sentence by Bragg going for his guns, and going in that swift way that made him a dreaded being for hundreds of miles around. And Kirby's right hand leaped backward too.

But like lightning, Bob Ring's two hands flashed downward and up again. And one of the long-barrelled guns that he brought up, came spurting fire. It roared only a hair's breadth of a second ahead of that of Bragg's gun. Bragg pitched forward, a bullet through his heart. Ring stood in his tracks several long seconds, his other gun on Kirby. That worthy had stopped with his gun only half out of its holster, when he saw the uncanny swiftness with which the other two men went to battle. Ring took a few more stagger-

ing steps toward Kirby, his gun still on him.

"Kirby," he said finally, "yuh're the one that brought that killer to this cow town. Now yuh're the one that's goin' to take 'im out. Git 'im on yore shoulder and start walkin'."

It took more curt orders and a menacing threat to make Kirby understand that Ring meant what he said. At last, however, the big burly rancher got down on his knees, trembling in every limb, and gathered up the lifeless form of his hireling. Out of the front door he staggered with his burden, Ring at his heels with his six-gun in his hand.

Through the little town Ring marched the quaking rancher, who, weakened by fear, found it difficult to keep the corpse on his back. But Ring was merciless and made him keep going, even when Kirby almost dropped his burden. A curious, excited bunch of men followed, but others stayed to flock about Smith bound on the horse.

Out of the town and up the hill to where the Mexicans dug and shovelled, Ring directed his cowardly victim, who by this time had grown sick because of the gory load he bore. Ring himself was pale, and twice he paused to pass his hand over his eyes, as if fighting back blindness. But he forced the panting, sweating Kirby to keep reeling on up the hill.

"Put Bragg down right beside that hole," commanded the cowboy, "and then tell the gravediggers how close yuh want yore own bones to his."

"What," gasped Kirby, "after me carryin' that load all the way up here?"

"Better after than before, for the simple reason it saves the trouble of somebody packin' you up here too. Kirby, yuh're goin' the same way Bragg went."

"No," cried Kirby, "you don't dare kill me. I've done nothin' to be murdered for."

"It ain't murder, it's plain execution for the dirty murders yuh've hired done on this range. They won't be any questions asked about law neither. Look down yonder, already they's fifty men takin' Buck Smith out to the Noose Tree by the creek. But I'm givin' yuh a chanct. Throw yore gun, Kirby, for I'm goin' to kill yuh!"

"No, no, Bob," pleaded Kirby, "there's no use in us shootin' each other like this. I'll take you in as full half pardner on the K Triangle."

"Say that agin," hissed Ring, "and I'll shoot yuh down without the slim chanct I'm givin' yuh. Throw that gun, yuh low-down briber!"

Kirby already was damp with sweat, but now great drops poured out on his dark, stubby-bearded face. His big, whitish eyes bulged in their sockets as they glued themselves on Ring's right hand. His knees shook and his huge, hairy hands could not control themselves.

"But, Bob," he screamed, at last finding his tongue, "I didn't tell Bragg and Smith to kill anybody. I only——"

"Save yore lips them lies as yuh cash in Kirby. Once more, I say to go for yore gun or I shoot anyway."

Still Kirby stood trembling in mortal terror, because he knew he was face to face with the death to which he had secretly sentenced his range rivals. Then another piteous cry for mercy broke from his lips and he held out his hands toward Ring beseechingly. But the cowboy turned his head to look down at the avenging mob that was now rushing toward the Noose Tree on the edge of Burro Point.

Kirby's hands were still waving frantically in the air when he saw Ring's head turned away from him. Then, seizing the chance of a second or two, one of those hands shot downward for the gun that he hoped to save his wretched life with. His fingers gripped the gun butt and the weapon came leaping into action.

A red blaze spat out toward Ring, but the gun never barked again, for another six-gun had belched its hot messenger of death almost in the same tenth of a second. Kirby swayed on his feet a few seconds, clutching at his breast, then plunged forward, his white face half buried in the fresh dirt the Mexicans had thrown out of the graves.

"Had to trick yuh into goin' for yore gun, coward," Ring choked out, "but I

reckon—I give yuh almost—too much time."

Here he coughed and spat up blood. In his left shoulder was an ugly wound that Bragg's bullet had made. It had been wrenching him with pain all this time, besides making his left arm useless. Now, a fresh stream of red was spilling from the hole Kirby's bullet had made in his right breast.

"But," the indomitable cowboy went on, as he sank down and excited men rushed about him, "I'll pull through somehow—and—some day I'll—own the K Triangle myself—and I'll own the ranch honest, too."

CURIOUS INVENTIONS

A NEW SLEEPING-GAS

FRENCH Army officers are anxiously awaiting the reports on final tests of two new German gases, one of which is said to render harmless all known forms of poison gas, and the other having the effect of putting whole armies to sleep for four hours.

It is just such new gases toward which the chemical warfare and defensive branches of European armies have been earnestly working since the terrible ravages of poison gas in the late war, and if Germany's claims prove correct, it is probable that the existing military establishments of the world will be radically altered. Such is the opinion of both French and foreign military experts here.

Whether the German claims are actually based on facts remains to be seen, but it is understood that the French military officials have information which warrants close investigation of the final tests. It is no secret that the intelligence services of European armies are bending their efforts to obtain detailed knowledge of the new gases.

SCHEELITE DISCOVERED IN WEST

DISCOVERY of scheelite, one of two chief classifications of tungsten ore, in the Red Top Mine in the boundary district of Washington, was announced recently by J. Richard Brown, owner of the mine. The ore is said to be worth nearly $700 to the ton.

WORKS NINE YEARS ON MOTOR

ALFRED SCHMITKER of Cincinnati is the inventor of an air-cooled engine weighing only 200 pounds and having only thirty-eight major parts. He worked nine years perfecting the motor.

PROPELLER DRIVES CARS

AN aeronautical engineer in Germany is the inventor of a suspension railroad with cars attaining a speed of more than 200 miles an hour and driven by a propeller.

A DELICATE MACHINE

THE University of Washington has a weighing and recording machine that will register 1-1,000th of a gram. It is so delicate that even pencil marks are detected.

THE CAUSE OF KNOCKING

AT a plant, in the research laboratories of General Motors, tests were being conducted to determine the cause of knocking in gasoline motors. One of the chemists conceived a brilliant idea: possibly knocking in motors was due in some way to the colors present inside the cylinder during combustion. Going to the chemical storeroom, he asked for some colored chemical soluble in gasoline. Out of some 10,000 at hand, the storekeeper gave him idoine, the only chemical in the lot which had the property of eliminating knocking! The color guess was wrong; but due to the happy circumstance of picking up iodine it was possible to solve the riddle of knocking in gasoline motors, and to work out the theory of anti-detonants which, it is believed, will bring about revolutionary changes in the design of internal combustion engines.

CAMERA RECORDS GROWTH OF CATTLE

BIOGRAPHICAL sketches of barnyard babies at the government experimental dairy farm at Beltsville, Md., are written with a camera.

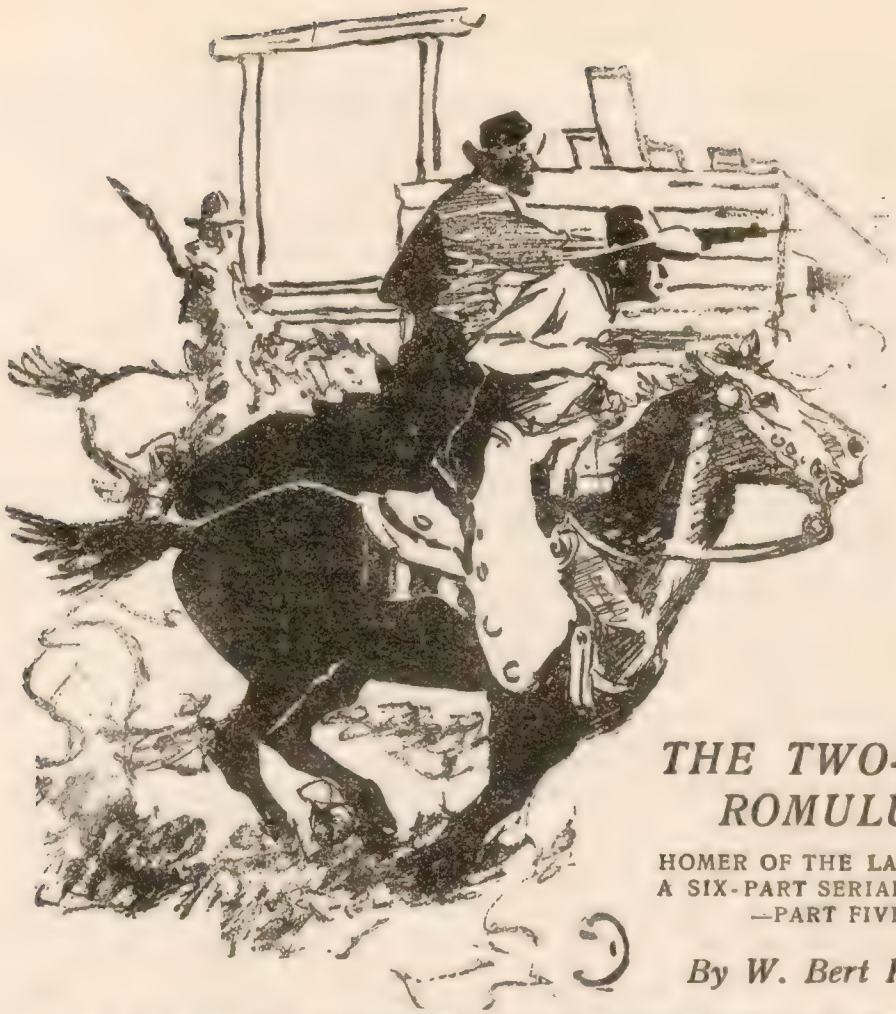
From calfhood to maturity, photographs of the herd are made at regular intervals, and, with a record of dates, of various weights and other changes affixed to each picture, investigators are able to record the changes of conformation and development in such a way as to provide material assistance in cattle breeding studies.

A feature of the photographic work is the use of a background, cross-ruled in six-inch squares, for "shooting" at stages up to a year old. Older animals pose on a semi-circular board track, but all the pictures are taken with the same camera, which is placed on a post and at the same focal length. In this way, comparisons between various animals and between different pictures of the same animal can be equitably made.

The photographs show some striking changes in general conformation of an animal in a single year, marked shifting in the angle of the rump in a few months' time and other transformations. They tell, it is held, an indisputable story of each animal and are of much value in a breeding test where comparable information is recorded in each succeeding generation.

GLOVES STICK TO WHEEL

SHEEPSKIN driving mitts, lined with fleece and attached to the auto steering wheel so that they cannot slip and the motorist can withdraw his hand quickly to grasp the brakes, are one of the newest inventions for motorists.



THE TWO-GUN ROMULUS

HOMER OF THE LAZY D IN A SIX-PART SERIAL NOVEL —PART FIVE

By W. Bert Foster

READ IN THE OPENING PARAGRAPHS THE COMPLETE DETAILS OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED AND GO ON WITH THE STORY

"ROME wasn't built in a day!
Any hombre with sense surely knows it.
When the sun shines, yuh got to make hay——"

was the burden of the new roundelay of Homer (Two-Gun) Stillson, the Panhandle minstrel; and he was so busy with his immediate hay crop that—so his old pard, Larry (Poke) Fellows declared—if the young cattleman suffered with hives as well, he must of necessity have gone to a sanitarium!

Homer's own troubles and those of his friends at this time were not matters for hilarious comment. The titles to the valley lands and ranges in the Big Chimney country, well west of his first ranch at Jade Springs, were questioned by certain other ranchers as well as by a bunch of Hatchersville politicians who "had it in" for Homer in any case. Several of these doubtful titles were entangled in ancient Indian grants and were difficult to trace. Homer was nevertheless busy building his new ranchhouse and corrals in the valley, risking a good deal on the possibility of the matter turning out in his favor. Anyway, he was ready to fight.

Then there was Johnny Little Bear's affair, which the two-gun cattleman had impulsively shouldered. The young Crow, practically robbed of more than two thousand dollars by Sandburr Jimson, a

gambler, and Pappy Hicks, the keeper of a trailside inn, claimed to have fired his forty-five at a rattlesnake just when the old innkeeper stumbled into range and was killed. Homer aided Johnny and Carlotta Gonzalez, his girl friend, the former to get away from Tom Lamb, the sheriff, and the latter who obtained Johnny's money, from the widowed Marm Hicks, who claimed that Carlotta had stolen the dinero.

Homer and his outfit were forced to battle with the sheriff and his cohorts in Hatchersville, and with the B-40-Bar bunch of ruffians in the hills. He left Poke in charge at the site of the building operations, and to watch Sandburr Jimson, who had become a self-invited guest at the encampment. The gambler "cleaned the camp" of all but the money locked in the office safe and got an I. O. U. from that unlucky card devotee, Poke Fellows, for $200. To pay this note off hand, the professional gambler was determined Poke should open the safe and draw ahead on his account with Homer.

After Homer's "lady with the takin' voice" with her baby, Miz Sue Donaldson, and Rylla Boggs unexpectedly arrived, Poke feared Sandburr would "spill the beans" to them regarding his losses at poker; therefore, he promised to open the safe secretly that night if Homer did not return from Hatchersville, and let Sandburr depart with the clean-up of the camp.

Poke rode out, hoping to meet Homer and his outfit. Sandburr lurked about the office awaiting the return of the straw boss. After dark a muffled rider came into camp, left his horse in a thicket, and approached the office. He opened the door with a key, and Sandburr, on the qui vive, followed him, gun in hand. He found the intruder at the safe with the door open. Throwing down his gun on him, the gambler accosted the unknown and the latter, his face masked and guns in his hands, startled, whirled on his heels to discover Sandburr.

The J. S. outfit, camped for the night at an abandoned ranch beside the trail to the Big Chimneys, were on the alert in expectation of an attack from riders from the desert; before moonrise Homer spied three separate bands approaching the camp.

CHAPTER XXIV

What the Doctor Ordered

"THREE bunches," he murmured. "Dunno how many more. There's something doing. All these jaspers ain't just taking a stroll by starlight—not any! Somebody's going to let loose on us, and let loose sudden. That's airtight."

He spent little time in reflections of this character. His active mind once having grasped the possible situation, he decided almost immediately upon the wisest course to follow.

He knew where each man was sleeping. The wranglers were together near the corral. There were two sentinels on duty there as well. These six men he believed could take care of the mules and the saddle stock. All but Bayberry. He would entrust his stallion to nobody's care but his own in this emergency.

"Haze them hawsses and mules over t'other side of this corral, boys. It's darker over there. Take down a panel of the fence and get 'em out into the hills. Hold them there till we see how the ruckus is going tuh turn out."

"By golly, Boss!" complained one of the wranglers in a whisper. "Ain't we going to have no part nor lot in this? Why in heck should we be treated like step-children?"

"Don't crab so, Billy," Homer advised. "It may be you'll have a little hell of your own on your hands before we're through with this. I dunno how many of them fellers there is—and we got the wagon and house walls to shelter us."

He had slapped the saddle on Bayberry, having left it hanging on the fence at dark, and cinched it firmly; he led the bay across to the back of the ranchhouse, but did not ride him. It was in the old outkitchen that the horse of the unknown intruder had been formerly stabled, and Homer took advantage of the same shelter for his stallion.

"Keep your feets quiet in yere, Bayberry-hawss," he admonished, rubbing Bayberry's velvety nose before leaving him. "You're supposed to be daid in this act, like the feller said."

He slipped around the house, keeping well within the deeper shadow until he came to the wagon. The mule-skinner was asleep on the seat. Homer stepped on the tongue and shook him awake.

"Hey, Sim! Rouse out that other boy and both of you slip into the house," he whispered when the wagon driver grunted an acknowledgment of Homer's attentions. "I seen more'n a Dutch dozen of riders circling around yere—and they ain't come to hang no May-basket on our door, if anybody should ride up and ax yuh. We're goin' tuh catch bullets in our hats, like enough."

"They'll stampede my mules," was Sim's first expressed thought.

"I got six men workin' on them and the hawsses," declared the cowman. "Don't fret. They're being hazzed out at the far end of the corral, and mebbe the boys'll get 'em off into some arroyo where they can hole up till mawnin'. The other six of us have got tuh see that these jaspers don't monkey with the sawmill parts in this wagon and bust 'em like they did before."

"How do yuh know that's what they want, Boss?"

"I'm betting airy dollar I got that Tom Grade is chief of them hombres. Maybe more'n B-40-Bar hands is helping him, but he's in this raid, if anybody should ride up and ax yuh.

"Back in yere, now," he added seeing that the remainder of his crew were stirring. "No smoking, Benjy! Yuh wantuh draw lead? Take your stands at windows and doors like I told you at supper. And don't let 'em rush yuh none from the back.

"If they are after what we got in the wagon, you can easy center your fire on them that tries for it—— Frozen hoptoads! Here's that girl. Carlotta, you keep under cover. Yuh hear me?"

"Oh, Señor Stillson! Weel there be a fight?" she wanted to know eagerly. "See! I have my pistol ready."

A shout—several distant shots, probably signals agreed upon between the bands of marauders—followed by the drumming of approaching hooves.

"Wait till you can see what you are shooting at boys," admonished Homer. "Then hop to it and give 'em a-plenty."

There had come a glow into the starlit sky by this time—an increasing reflection of the rising moon. Homer saw from the veranda to which he had sped, a group of riders thundering along the trail from the south.

The seeming echo of this cavalcade caused him to turn swiftly to look in the opposite direction. Another group of horsemen advancing at a wild gallop! There came shots from across the trail in front of the ranchhouse and the tarp over the wagon body was spattered as though by a heavy hail-storm.

"Steady!" called out Homer. "Don't get fussed. We can't keep 'em at a distance at first, so there's no use in using our rifles yet. When I turn loose, pour in all the forty-five bullets yeh got—and shoot saddle high. They done brought this on theirselves and gottuh stand the gaff. Now!"

He leaped to the edge of the broken and rickety porch. In the lead of the nearest troop rode a giant figure on a big horse. Homer raised his voice to a savage key, addressing this individual as though through a megaphone:

"Tom Grade! Hi, Tom Grade! I'm just about tuh pepper you-all with lead like I said I would if ever I met up with you again. Call off your waddies, dang yuh!"

A second volley of shots was his reply. Homer crouched beside a post and all of those buzzing bees flew over his head. With both guns in his hands the cowman rose up slowly. He shot from the hip and he sprayed the van of the troop behind the giant figure of the owner of the B-40-Bar.

He heard the thud of several bullets from his own weapon when they reached his principal target. The big horse stumbled to its knees. A concerted yell from the enemy accompanied the falling of their

leader's horse and the pitching of his body over the saddle bow.

Up rose his own men at the windows behind Homer to empty their six-guns into the converging troops of horsemen. They were fairly well sheltered; the enemy could aim only at the flashes. Two or three of the attacking party, beside the big leader, were unhorsed.

Grade, exploding bitter curses, extricated his feet from the stirrups and rolled under the freight wagon. He was out of sight—and out of mind—there, during the next few moments. Homer and his hands were much too busy to worry about a probably wounded man.

Every time Homer fired his guns, he moved, thereafter — and moved pronto. Rolling about on the broken floor of the veranda in this way he managed to escape the flying lead.

The fusillade from the house had its effect. The attacking riders scattered, some galloping around the ranchhouse to the rear where they might reload with less interference. Homer withdrew from the veranda, but he would not leave the front of the house.

"A couple of you boys go back there and try to keep 'em from crowding us. They outnumber us right now more'n two to one. But if we're going to get this freight home intact, like the feller said, we got to save the hawsses. So we can't holler for the wranglers to help us—— Frozen hoptoads! There's something doing with *them* right now."

Gunfire from the hills beyond the corrals announced unequivocally an attack on the caveyard. Homer did not much worry about that. He believed the wranglers could look out for the saddle stock and the mules as well as themselves. What he actually feared at the moment was the concentration of fifteen or more of the gunmen on the ranchhouse.

The enemy came charging again—still on horseback and scattering lead promiscuously. Homer had managed to get his men on the floor, below the level of the window sills. He forced Carlotta to kneel beside him, sheltered by the door-jamb.

"If you catch a chunk of lead, girl," he told her, "Johnny Little Bear will near 'bout scalp me. Now, squat down. Yere they come again."

It was no jovial experience. The gang meant business. And being so few in number, the J. S. outfit had small chance at first of doing much but save their own skins.

The mounted troops swept by on either side of the house, wheeling at a distance to return. The lead from their guns rattled on the walls and buzzed through the wrecked windows like hail-stones. Homer made few bull's eyes; but there were one or two casualties during the first ten minutes of the fight, besides the unsaddling of Big Tom Grade.

Occasionally Homer directed a bullet under the wagon where the B-40-Bar owner had taken refuge. He could not be sure that Grade was still there, or whether he was seriously hurt at all. But he kept mighty still!

"That big bully ain't a-feared—if anybody should ride up and ax yuh," Homer muttered. "But what's he aiming at?"

A question hard to answer. And, after all, one that was secondary to that more important query: What was going to happen next?

The bandit crew was spending a lot of lead. They circled about after each charge long enough to reload their guns, and then rode in whooping like Indians on the warpath, peppering the walls of the old hacienda most viciously. They were using their six-guns altogether now; for it is not so easy with a rifle to shoot accurately from the back of a galloping horse.

"Get them Winchesters into action, hombres," Homer suddenly commanded. "Le's give 'em a good run-off this time —— Now!"

He carried no rifle himself, for Homer was strictly a six-gun fighter; but there were four magazine guns inside the ranch house. When these were "turned loose" with judgment and skill, the enemy was chased completely out of sight. The glow of the rising moon in the east did not yet reveal moving objects at any distance.

Since the hearing of that fusillade of

shots in the hills, nothing had been apprehended from the wranglers by their mates. Homer could only hope that the horse herd was all right; he must run his chance of that. If the enemy could be held at bay here at the ranchhouse——

"Oh, Señor Stillson! What is that? A fire?" shrilled Carlotta suddenly in Homer's ear.

The cattleman stood up quickly and stared beyond the wagon-top. There appeared a leaping flame, more than horse high; it was approaching.

"A torch, by gummy! A gas torch," muttered Homer. "And the moon coming up. They ain't got it to see with. What's it for?"

"Oh, Señor Stillson!" whispered the mestizo. "Is eet that they will burn us out?"

"Frozen hoptoads! The wagon!" exploded the man. "Once that rubbish and the crating on the machinery gets touched off, we're going tuh be plumb in a hole. A hot fire will do a heap of damage to them castings and valves."

He wheeled to look back into the dim room. "Turn loose with those Winchesters again, hombres. Drive the dawgs back. Otherwise they'll put us in a danged bad pickle. Shoot tuh kill!"

He leaped through the doorway again and to the edge of the veranda, both of his guns blazing. The troop came along the trail at a gallop, one of the riders waving the gasoline torch above his head. They kept their guns hot all right, pouring in a devilish fusillade.

The fellow with the torch rode around his mates, and straight at the wagon. Homer was confident that if he threw the inflammable torch under the cover, the scattering gasoline would make of wagon and contents a roaring furnace in a very few minutes. Nor was it likely that the ranchhouse itself would escape. Within the next few moments the J S ranchman was going to be beaten by the enemy, or he must win!

He was slipping cartridges into the chambers of his guns with nimble fingers, measuring the speed of the charging ruffians (now led by the torch bearer) meantime. Two-Gun Stillson's weather-seamed countenance was as grim at this juncture as a gargoyle's.

"Give 'em hell, boys!" he shouted and turned loose again upon the advancing troop.

Unexpectedly, and from almost directly beneath his feet, a geyser of flame and bullets tore through the planks. Homer leaped back with the agility of an acrobat —and well that he did so. He escaped any wound at that moment, but the threat of death was imminent.

It flashed into his mind that Tom Grade must have crept from under the freight wagon to the space beneath the veranda. He had turned loose his forty-five at this critical moment, and any person on the veranda was in deadly peril.

"Get back!" Homer bawled to Carlotta in the doorway. "That danged sidewinder had just as leave shoot us as not—— Bang away at that hombre with the torch. I'll give this Tom Grade what the doctor ordered."

Just what may have been the medical prescription in question did not at the moment appear; but Homer Stillson was certainly a busy hombre for the next few moments. He backed to the end of the veranda, pushing cartridges into first one Colt and then the other. As he leaped lightly to the ground, the B-40-Bar hands came in a bunch to the wagon. The fellow with the torch was standing in the stirrups, whirling the brand about his head.

He was about to cast it in at the front of the covered wagon. Homer, disregarding the exposure of his own person to the line of fire, ran out into the trail. From his right-hand gun he poured a spray of lead between the posts which held up the veranda floor. The bullets from his other gun were aimed with deadly precision at the torch bearer.

The J S cattleman was a moment too late. A well-directed bullet crashed into the fellow's chest and he threw up his arms, pitching backward over his horse's crupper. But the blazing torch had already left his hand. Flaming disastrously, it shot under the canvas top into the crowded interior of the wagon!

CHAPTER XXV

The Running Fight

THE J S crew had emptied their rifles from inside the old ranchhouse. Reduced to the six-guns, they crowded to the front, trying to pick off such members of the bandit troop as might come within short range.

Homer found bullets flying from two directions over his head. The moonlight was not yet so broadcast that unmounted figures were easily distinguished; therefore the ranchman was in danger from friend as well as foe.

The peril of the gasoline torch which had been cast into the covered wagon was held by Homer Stillson as of much greater importance than his own safety. If the new parts of the sawmill were injured, the trip to town (and all that had come of it) was so much wasted time and effort.

He had a crew up there in the Big Chimneys eating their heads off like so many stalled horses. Even the profits from Homer's popular songs could not stand such a drain forever.

These thoughts were merely flashes through the cattleman's somewhat clouded mind. Just now he was in serious personal peril. He was one man—alone—amid the cavorting hooves of the B-40-Bar horses near the wagon, from inside which an angry glow of flame was already being radiated.

"Frozen hoptoads!" muttered Homer. "If I was only forking my Bayberry, I'd take a chance at running these jaspers off the map. But there ain't time to get no hawss—nossir! If that torch busts——"

He made a start for the tailboard of the covered wagon. Instantly there came a spurt of fire from under the house veranda. He was spied, and Tom Grade got immediately into action. He might at any moment get Homer's range.

He heard Carlotta Gonzalez shrill: "The wagon! It is on fire! Then the house must catch. We shall be burned out, Señors—oh, yes! Will you not do somet'ing?"

"Keep back! Keep inside the house!" Homer raised his voice in command. "Them hombres will sure pot you if yuh try to reach that wagon from the porch—if anybody should ride up and ax yuh—— And look out for Tom Grade."

The flame of the sputtering torch was wavering uncertainly; but it seemed as though the fire was *not* spreading with rapidity. These gasoline flares are tricky things, as Homer very well knew. This one might smoulder for some time before setting afire the rubbish inside the wagon; then again, it might explode the next moment, spray the interior of the wagon with the inflammable liquid, then—— Well! nothing could be done after that to save wagon and contents from destruction.

If anybody stepped upon the porch, bent upon reaching the wagon, there was light enough now to reveal this person to the scattered riders. They were all about Homer as he crept on hands and knees over the ground. His determination was to get to the wagon himself, if that damned Tom Grade did not pot him.

"Frozen hoptoads!" the J S cattleman exploded. "We can't shirk our duty—not-a-tall. We gottuh save the day, like the feller said when he tore the leaf off the calendar."

He writhed along the ground from the deeper shadows as swiftly as a snake, and gained the space under the wagon-box. A single shot promptly came his way from beneath the veranda. Homer instantly aimed at the flash, and this time he accomplished something worth while!

There was a yell and a burst of wild oaths from the man hit. Homer laughed.

"I hope tuh hell I nicked you good, Tom Grade!" he shouted. "If I didn't, wait till I come back. I aim tuh finish you before this ruckus is over—if I can."

He wriggled out between the wheels on the other side. With the house wall behind him, he was partially protected—at least, from the sight of the enemy. He scrambled up the spokes of one wheel, drew his knife, and slashed the tarp with two fierce strokes that gave him ample entrance into the wagon.

There was the flickering torch just before him. It had fallen by good chance upon some crated stuff rather than in the

inflammable rubbish. The wood was already smouldering.

He grabbed up an empty gunnysack and threw it over the torch, hoping to smother the flame, and then seizing the handle of the implement, Homer sprang for the forward end of the wagon. As he flung the sputtering lamp over the driver's seat and out upon the ground, he realized suddenly that there was seepage from it. This leakage had dribbled upon his chaps and boots. Trickling, hissing flames were all about his feet in the bottom of the wagon.

With a wild leap, he gained the other side of the wagon-box; but the flames accompanied him. Smoke spurted up in black geysers about him. He seized another sack, trying to beat out the fire with it, but this unconsidered effort merely scattered the flames.

The fire licked at his boots and chaps. He tore off the latter and flung them out at the front of the freight wagon. The light of the rising flames threw his gyrating shadow upon the tarp. Instantly the wagon was the target of a shower of bullets from the horsemen.

They were not likely to do much damage by firing at the dancing shadow of the ranchman. He was cutting pigeon-wings and other capers, to escape the spreading fire, moving just about as lively as he knew how.

The gunnysacks were too thin and "slimpsy" to beat out the flames. In desperation, Homer seized the stuffed leather cushion from the driver's seat, throwing it down and stamping upon it—shifting the cushion and jumping on it again.

The smoke increased and the fire was not much diminished. It is easier to scatter a gasoline blaze than to quench it. Nothing could be done with water, if he had it to hand; and to obtain earth with which to suppress the flames was of course impossible.

Something must be found to stifle it—sand, earth, even sawdust. Anything to shut the air from the blazing patches where the gasoline had been spilled.

"Frozen hoptoads! Them oats!" gasped out the sweating cattleman with sudden thought. "I aimed tuh feed 'em to my hawsses; but I'll feed 'em to the flames instead. No use hollerin' 'Fireman, save my oats!' "

He ripped open the nearest bag with his knife, upended it, and poured the contents of the bag on a patch of fire. Green oats cannot easily be ignited; the fire was instantly suppressed where the grain was heaped. Homer slit two other bags and dumped their contents about him; following which the flames suddenly were quenched and there remained only the rolling smoke to choke him.

The enemy was charging in once more.

The bullets tore most viciously through the wagon tarp. Homer was nicked along the side of the head and the blood began to run into his ear; the next moment a savage blow upon the point of his left shoulder whirled him about and all but cast him to the floor.

"Frozen hoptoads! I gottuh light out o' yere pronto, or those buggers will fill me full o' lead," he exclaimed. "That's airtight."

Stooping until he was below the side of the wagon-box (no bullet from a six-gun, at least, could penetrate the heavy oak plank) the cowman crept to the tailboard. From here he might leap to the veranda. But from minute to minute the moonlight was broadening, and in reaching the house door he would surely be seen by some of the approaching gang.

Still on his knees, sheltered for the moment by the side-board of the wagon, he heard a more distant thunder of hooves. Not the B-40-Bar crew this time; the sound began too far away. It increased momentarily—a stampede of hooves coming down the trail at terrific speed.

"Can this be another mess of Tom Grade's crew?" Homer muttered. "Frozen hoptoads! If it is, we're going tuh be plumb smothered—no two ways about that —— What'n'ell——"

He craned his neck to see over the edge of the wagon-box and around the tarp. A dozen or more riders were close in; but they were no committee of welcome for the fresh cavalcade. They rode in rather a panic-stricken way, shouting question and cross-question to each other.

For the moment the J S crew did not take up their entire attention.

Homer finally caught sight of the van of the band of newcomers. There were no horsemen in the lead; but almost at once he saw that the bronks galloping along the trail were his own! It was the J S caveyard, and behind the saddleless ponies rose the "Yee-yippy-yip!" of his wranglers.

The B-40-Bar gang fled before the coming herd. Homer dove out over the tailboard of the freight wagon and scrambled to his feet on the broken veranda. He was as excited as he well could be.

"Get out yere, you hombres, and help head off these bronks. Don't you leave cover, Carlotta, for those other waddies will sure be back," was the cowman's advice.

He leaped to the ground again and dove around the corner of the house, heading for the rear premises. He heard Bayberry stamping and trumpeting in the outhouse, while before the door lingered three of the B-40-Bar horsemen.

"Thar's somebody stabled a cayuse in yere, boys," one of these fellows was yelling. "Le's get him."

"Hi gash! We'd oughtuh get somethin' out o' the mess besides lead burns," agreed another.

Homer came a-shooting. More than all that had gone before, the cool assumption that they could get away with his stallion peeved him a pile. He was just as mad as a puff-adder.

"Dawgone your hides!" he yelled. "You waddies have made me all the trouble I aim tuh stand for. Git-fer out o' this fast as you can split the wind. Whoo!"

He was not at all careful how he used his guns. He just sprayed those three riders at long distance, and he must have nicked the men as well as their mounts in several places. The horses squealed with pain and fear, and went into the air.

The trio of ruffians took Homer's advice. They rode, quirting their horses as hard as they could, and in thirty seconds were out of sight. Bayberry was kicking the door down. Homer ran to open it and to soothe his ramping stallion.

"Keep your shirt on, hawss!" he commanded. "Ain't you got nawthin' else tuh do but raise a rumpus? I'll show yuh!"

He vaulted into the saddle when he got the horse out and seized the reins, heading Bayberry for the front of the hacienda. For the time being the B-40-Bar gang had disappeared, while the half-wild caveyard of J S ponies, with the mules, were milling in the open, the six mounted men holding them with difficulty. The remaining hands brought their saddles and appurtenances from the house.

Sim, the mule-skinner, was running about like a lively flea, seeking to noose his mules. Carlotta was shrieking for Bascom's pony to be brought her.

"Never yuh mind, gal," admonished Homer. "You jump into that wagon. If we can tackle in them mules, we're going to make a run for it. Those hombres will sure be back. If we tried to hold the fort in this house they'd burn us out like as not—if anybody should ride up and ax yuh.

"C'm'on, now!" He raised his voice raucously. "You hombres help Sim with the mules. Get the rest of the duffel in the wagon—— Frozen hoptoads! Where's Tom Grade?"

"You mean that bimbo under the piazza, Boss?" drawled Benjy. "Them other jaspers done sneaked him out o' there and rid off with him. Did you want him pertic'lar?"

"Only wanted to give him a ticket to the undertaker," growled out Homer savagely. "As long as that hombre is let ramble free and unconfined, he's goin' to be a plumb nuisance. Aw, well! There'll be other times, I reckon, for him and me tuh fight it out—and better than moonlight to light us up, like the feller said."

He gave his attention to the wrangling of the remaining horses and the bringing in of the cantankerous mules. They got the latter harnessed to the wagon. All the remaining pelf was piled in. Several of the boys beside Benjy and Jerry had been wounded. Homer's own left sleeve was saturated with blood, and his ear was caked with it. Nobody, however, had actually been crippled. They could all ride.

Once more they were privileged to beat off the enemy before pulling out from the hacienda. It was pretty sure that they would be hounded on the trail; but a running fight was better than being hived up where the ruffians could ride in close enough to fling another torch.

"We may haftuh fight our way clear to the Big Chimneys," declared the J S cattleman, "but, by golly! we'll fight! Wish there was half a dozen more of our boys yere. We'd sure run these B-40-Bar waddies off the map. We'd oughtuh be home in the valley right now. That's airtight."

CHAPTER XXVI

Sandburr Is Surprised

THE desire to arrive at the site of his new hacienda was not alone expressed by the Jade Springs ranchman. There was at least one other person who longed to see Homer there and to whom the desire was quite as poignant as to the cattleman himself.

If Poke Fellows had followed his personal hunch, he would have gathered a squad of the best gun-fanners remaining in the valley and set out at their head to meet the outfit supposedly returning from Hatchersville.

We have seen how hampered and harassed the lanky puncher was since his partner had pulled out for town. The presence of the buxom Rylla Boggs had no soothing effect upon the poker devotee; she seldom had such effect, no matter what might be Poke's circumstances or the subject of discussion between them. Rylla's opinion was that her journey had brought her to where every prospect pleased the eye and only man was vile.

She did not accuse Poke of being notably vicious; but she *did* believe that he was as weak as water and quite unable to judge for himself or govern his own affairs without her surveillance, especially his financial affairs.

Not that the cook of the Mountain View Hotel at Cadgerville was of an avaricious nature; but she was eminently practical, and far seeing enough in her small way, and she knew that Larry Fellows had a serious fault which must be corrected if they were to wed and "live happy ever after."

At this juncture, however, Poke's greatest annoyance was not furnished by Rylla, nor by the other women who had so unexpectedly arrived at the encampment in the Big Chimneys. By the Grace of God—or some other marvelous chance—Poke's losses to Sandburr Jimson at poker did not come to the ear of either May, Miz Sue, or Rylla. But Poke sweat blood for fear this knowledge would become the property of his lady friends.

Sandburr, nagging him for the money Poke had lost to him, had discovered the latter's fear of betrayal to the women. At once the gambler saw that he had Poke "where the hair was short." If Poke would not open the office safe and take out the two hundred dollars with which to redeem the I. O. U. he had given Sandburr, the latter would "just about ruin him with the women."

Poke had an uneasy feeling that perhaps the tin-horn had even a more vicious motive in his mind than merely to make the straw boss get out of the safe an advance on his own wages from Homer. If the strong-box was opened in the gambler's presence——

So Poke, who desired mightily to keep the whole matter secret, even from the remainder of Homer's crew, sidestepped doing as the gambler asked as long as possible, finally starting out on a faked errand for the chief entrance to the valley at mid-afternoon.

He had given his word to Sandburr Jimson that on his return that evening (if Homer had not got back) he would open the safe. Poke did not want anybody else to know he proposed doing this, even though he had a perfect right to do it. Every member of the crew would want to draw ahead, too, and go to gambling again with Sandburr.

He rode down the valley, out through the natural gateway to it, swapping greetings with the two sentinels on duty there. They reported that they had heard nor seen nothing of the party expected from Hatchersville.

But it was time (as Poke well knew) that Homer and his outfit came back. The lanky puncher spurred along the trail past the spot where Joe Thurlock had been killed, and where Homer's mysterious savior had been hidden among the rocks.

"And that wasn't no Sandburr Jimson, no matter what that jasper claims about t'other time. My soul!" muttered Poke. "Old Homer Cayenne has sure got friends all over this Panhandle."

Poke's pony racked along until dusk. It was not dark, for the stars came out before the sun was fairly set. This was a haunted trail—haunted with memories of many happenings to the two partners on this winding road through the badlands to town.

"My soul!" considered Poke. "There was that jasper at the old ranch who did the spying act on me and Two-Gun. He done got away from us mighty slick. And the guy that bumped off Joe Thurlock—Hoh! What become of those fellers, now, I wantuh know? Wonder does Two-Gun know?"

He had ridden no more than two miles from the gap in the hills when he suddenly heard an unexpected traveler behind him. The hoofbeats came on rapidly. Poke had looked for nobody to follow him from the valley; this could not be a friend; therefore he looked for a foe.

He pulled his pony out of the track into a thicket. Hand upon gun, he waited. Through the dusk appeared a moving shadow—a horseman, without doubt.

"This jasper mebbe ain't on my trail," considered Poke aloud; "but I ain't taking no chances. I'd ruther foller him than have him foller me—now, then!"

He had backed his racker far enough into the brush, he was sure, to escape ordinary eyesight; nor did his horse move nor make a sound. Yet when the strange horseman arrived at Poke's hiding place, he pulled in briskly so that his pony skidded.

"Waugh!" the rider grunted. "White man no shoot. Me friend."

"My soul!" snorted out Poke. "It's an Injun; and he can see like a cat in the dark!"

"You Mist' Stillson's pard," pronounced the Indian. "You know me, Johnny Little Bear."

"Well, I'll be switched!" ejaculated the lathy puncher. "You're the redskin that killed ol' Pappy Hicks."

Johnny Little Bear's reply after a minute's hesitation was very bitter. "Ye'ah. And I kill another white man since that time. I shoot the foreman of the B-40-Bar. Yuh wantuh hang me for that, too?"

"My soul!" was Poke's comment. "You sure mean that? Does Two-Gun know it?"

"I ain't ever seen Señor Stillson. I only see his wife and the other ladies crossing the valley to his new wickiup the other evening."

"Well, I'll be danged! Two-Gun will sure want to meet up with you, boy. And if you ride fur enough on this trail, you oughtuh meet him coming back from Hatchersville. If that danged sheriff ain't just about smothered him there," he added with unconcealed anxiety.

"You think he coming from town?" the Indian asked quickly. "There was signal smoke on a ridge there," he pointed dramatically, "just before dark."

"There *was?* I missed that," confessed Poke.

"White man's smoke. Not Injun. I was riding on to see. Too far away to hear guns."

"Go on!" exclaimed Poke, coming out of the brush in a hurry. "I'm with you. He might easy have got into trouble, although he's got near a dozen of the boys and the freight wagon."

With no further discussion the two got under way. As Poke had said, the Indian boy *did* have vision like a cat's, or some other night-prowling animal. Riding ahead, Johnny was able to pick out the soft going—turf beside the trail, or deep sand—on which the horses made no sound but a faint "clopperty-clop."

Johnny pressed his ragged pony to the limit and Poke had some difficulty in keeping up the pace. He had no idea as to where the ridge was on which the Indian had marked smoke signals. Nor did he

question how Johnny knew the smoke was made by white men instead of red. Odd about that. Poke had no more use for an Indian than did the ordinary Texas old-timer; but in the matter of sign reading, he accepted Johnny's word unquestioningly.

Finally the Indian made a sweeping gesture with his arm, pointing ahead. There were flickering lights — one, two, three of them. Fires in a triangular position and burning clearly. On this hot evening even a large party of travelers would scarcely need so many cook fires. These were well above the trail to the left hand.

"You reckon that was where you seen the smoke, Injun?" demanded Poke, urging his mount to Johnny's stirrup.

"White man no holler. Voice carry long way a night like this," admonished Johnny Little Bear. "Those hombres hole up on that ridge. Listen! Those are guns."

It did seem that Poke heard the crackle of gunfire. The Crow was right. Some sort of a desultory fire was going on down the trail. The puncher had brought no rifle with him from the valley and must depend entirely upon his Colt if they got into the scrimmage. As far as he could see, Johnny was no better armed.

"My soul!" the white man ruminated. "Seems like we're going tuh haid right into Old Man Trouble's front yard. Woof! Wonder how many of these jaspers there is, and which side we better take?"

However, if Homer and his outfit were in trouble at that spot, Poke could be pretty sure that the encampment on the ridge was that of the J S crew. If it was being besieged, as seemed probable, the besiegers would be on the alert for any possible attack from the trail.

Johnny Little Bear drove on at a pace which was quite all either of the ponies could endure. The fires had been spied a long way ahead; but again they distinguished the crackle of guns. Against the luminous dusk it was possible to see the flashes of the weapons—a scattered line of battle.

The Crow turned suddenly to the left from the trail, and headed up the rising ground. He knew the country much better, it seemed, than Poke. The latter followed on unquestioning.

However, within a very few moments, Poke got a sudden comprehension of the lay-out of the hills. The ridge on which the fires burned was that eminence from which he and his partner had spied the herd of mavericks which Tom Grade later claimed as his own.

Poke began to figure the thing out. Had Homer arrived at this point on his way back from Hatchersville an hour or two, even, before sunset, unless some unexpected accident happened he would have pushed on to the gap in the Big Chimneys.

Either the wagon had broken down, or he had met and was fighting a bigger and more determined mob than it seemed reasonable to expect.

Poke recalled now that behind that rim of high ground there was a small depression in which the covered wagon might be hidden—which was, indeed, a natural fortress. The three fires on the summit of the ridge burned clear and high. Whenever the shadow of a man appeared between them, a faggot in his arms, the gunfire from below broke out viciously. The feeder of the fires did not linger.

"Johnny!" huskily begged the puncher. "Le's get where we can turn loose on them guys below. I know which side we're on now. That's Two-Gun's outfit up there ——And, dawgone it! There's a female."

The Crow pulled up with a snort. Both had seen a female figure run between two of the fires, to disappear almost instantly. They could not be mistaken.

A burst of revolver shots followed from the gang on the hillside below. It seemed a fusillade deliberately aimed at the woman.

"My soul! Mebbe 'tain't Two-Gun a-tall," ejaculated the astonished Poke. "He wouldn't be bringing back no woman. Anyhow, he better hadn't with May Holman holed up like she is there in the valley, waiting for him. No, sir."

But Johnny Little Bear was plumb serious. He barked out bitterly: "That Carlotta Gonzalez. I know her."

"Cripes! The girl at Pappy Hicks' posada?"

"Si, Señor Poke. They shoot at her. Murderers!"

"And you reckon she's traveling with our outfit?"

"I cannot understand otherwise. No. Señor Stillson is our friend."

"Betcha," grumbled Poke. "She'd better keep down. And we gottuh do something about these jaspers, Injun. Whether Two-Gun's up there or not, a bunch of yahoos who turn their guns loose on women have gottuh be fixed proper."

Johnny Little Bear was impatient. "We work quick. Ride right along down here at the foot of the ridge and shoot up. Our bullets go over heads of the white men up there; but we mebbeso sting these murderers."

"Right, boy. I'm with yuh. You got more'n one gun?"

"No. Twelve shots between us. When we ride across there, you stay in brush and I'll ride back. When I begin shoot again, you start. We travel from both ends and chase these murderers out."

"You're well-whistling, boy," agreed Poke heartily. "I'm two-spot to your ace. Spout your orders. My ears is open."

They were behind a thicket; but sitting in their saddles, they could see over the brush. Now and then a shadow crossed the opening before them. The besiegers had tied their mounts somewhere in the shadow and were doing their shooting afoot.

This was an advantage to Poke and the Crow. When they burst through the thicket and began firing, they almost ran some of the enemy down. Two or three fell under the ponies' hooves, and whether they ever got up or not, neither Poke nor Johnny Little Bear remained to find out.

Their charge along the foot of the hill certainly caused a panic. The counter attack was unexpected, and already the B-40-Bar riders and their associates were much wearied of this running fight.

Poke's strident voice reached Homer and his companions where they had been forced to take sanctuary at the top of the rise, encouraging the J S outfit to a degree. On the other hand, the enemy was discouraged in proportion. It seemed as though a goodly reinforcement must have come to the aid of the J S cattleman and his outfit.

Johnny Little Bear whooped like a red demon, his pony drumming back and forth behind the line of desert bandits. He emptied his gun with care into the now panic-stricken fellows who had made Homer so much trouble for more than a full day. The gang had hung to the J S outfit with bulldog tenacity.

Now this foe was between two fires. The reinforcements for Homer Stillson had taken him quite unexpectedly. Homer and his companions came pouring out of the camp above. Poke—roaring his battle-cry—followed the Crow's orders, badgering the B-40-Bar riders as they ran for their horses.

Getting astride their mounts, the desert men larruped them up the ridge, but on a long slant from the encampment, and into the dark. They left three dead men behind; nor were these all they had lost in the twenty-four hours of the running fight.

Homer and his band had been driven to take to cover, just as Poke supposed because of an accident. He had plenty of saddle stock in his remuda, but dared not spare one of his small force to ride ahead to the valley for help. With only six animals used to harness, when the lead mule (that had been wounded back in Hatchersville) gave out, Homer was forced to camp. There was no critter to put in the mule's place.

"And they are all pretty neár dragged out, if anybody should ride up and ax yuh," grumbled Homer, referring to the mules. "Wish you'd brought some draft stock with you. Frozen hoptoads! How'd you happen to come here, anyhow?"

His partner for once was not slow to tell him the tale. The situation at the valley encampment disturbed Homer's mind not a little. May's reason for coming there without pre-announcement puzzled the ranchman. But Sandburr Jimson's insistent demand that the safe be opened disturbed Homer more than anything else.

"That carrion-eating buzzard," declared Homer, "has got something up his sleeve. You ain't got much brains, Poke——"

"Hoh!"

"But you showed a smitch of something like 'em when you started out for me this evening. I'm going to leave you to boss things yere, old-timer (and mebbe there'll be more fighting in it, too) while I pull muh freight for the valley. You come along tomorrer, takin' it slow and easy like the feller said when the dentist started for to pull his teeth.

"If I find that Sandburr Jimson trying to crack my safe, I sure will surprise him a pile. That's airtight."

Homer had never spoken more prophetically. Sandburr Jimson was due for the surprise of his life about two hours later that evening. Bayberry had transported his master at his very speediest pace to the site of the new hacienda.

The ranchman did not delay a moment, not even to see his wife; he entered the office first of all to make sure that the gambler had not put something over on Poke and himself.

He opened the safe by the light of a candle which he set on the floor. Sandburr's malevolent voice at the door was Homer's first warning of that individual's presence. The former spun about on his heels to give the gambler the surprising sight of his masked face. It halted Sandburr's vituperations on the instant.

Homer already had one gun in his left hand. He reached for its mate and, still crouching before the safe, let go with both of the weapons at the startled tinhorn.

The explosions of the two guns in the closed room brought feminine shrieks from the main part of the house. Sandburr's own comment upon the unexpected occurrence was a scream of pain.

He fell backward out of the doorway, his own gun flying from his hand. Homer's bullets had plowed lightly over the gambler's ribs on either side. The latter bawled like a freshly branded calf.

Homer had seen all he wished to see in the safe. As he rose, he pushed the door shut and twirled the knob. He leaped across the room to reach the open door as the women came screaming to the inner entrance of the office. The ranchman recognized May's voice.

"Frozen hoptoads! I'll sure be in a mess yere in a minute," he muttered. "I'll git out pronto."

His face still shrouded by the mask, Homer spurned the body of Sandburr on the ground and darted into the shadow before any of the startled hands arrived from the bunkhouse or the Mex quarters.

CHAPTER XXVII

For Once Poke Laughs

MAY STILLSON (with Miz Sue and Rylla Boggs close behind her) got the door into the office opened and saw the candle flickering on the floor before the safe, while the air was filled with the pungent smoke of gunpowder.

The ranchwoman's glance compassed first of all the safe. Its door was closed tight, and at this discovery, she felt quite a pang of relief, although she had no good reason for expecting the presence of any burglar in the camp, no matter how much lacking in general morality many of the hands might be.

She heard a snorting and blowing outside which attracted her to the open door. On the ground a man was kicking and writhing in the dark, and not until he struggled up as far as his knees, and Rylla had brought an oil lamp from the other room, did the woman recognize the distorted face of Sandburr Jimson.

"Dang the scoundrel!" burst forth the gambler, a hand holding hard against his ribs on either side. "Dang him, he shot me!"

"Who shot you?" demanded Miz Sue crisply. "What are you hanging around this office for? Maybe you should have been shot."

"Oh!" said May, less severely. "It's Mr. Jimson."

"Well! Has this Mr. Jimson any business here where Jack Stillson keeps his money and papers?"

"That's what was bothering me," spoke up the gambler boldly. "I was going by,

and I saw that feller slip into the office. He had a key, or some way of opening the door easy."

"Why! Nobody has a key but Larry, now that Jack is away," May said, puzzled.

"I don't know about that," said Sandburr doggedly. "Anyhow I had my suspicions and I follered him in. There he was down in front of the safe trying to open it. Ouch!"

"Trying to open it?" cried Rylla. "Not Larry Fellows?"

"Ouch!" The gambler pulled away one of his hands from his side and shook drops of blood from his fingers in the radiance of the lamp.

"You're wounded!" exclaimed May with more sympathy than her friends displayed.

"Ouch! That's what he done to me. Nicked me along both sides. He——"

"You mean to say Larry Fellows was trying to open the safe, and that he shot you when you disturbed him?" demanded Miz Sue.

"I dunno who he was," snarled the gambler. "I didn't see his face."

"But you are accusing Larry," exclaimed Rylla.

"Larry knew the safe combination. He would have a perfect right to open the safe in any case," insisted May Stillson.

"Say! Why didn't you see his face?" the mistress of the Parachute Ranch asked with continued sharpness.

"He had a mask on. Then he turned loose on me with two guns before I could get into action. And he scraped my ribs sure enough. Ouch! I do smart."

Miz Sue, she of the tart tongue, remarked: "I've been told you're a pretty smart hombre. Your ribs should feel natural."

Some of the boys had now arrived from the bunkhouse and wanted to know all about it.

"Hadn't they better take this casualty over to a bed and dose him up, May? You'll maybe want to see him to-morrow," Miz Sue said significantly.

The disturbed ranchwoman nodded. She turned her back on the wounded man and walked across to the safe. Yes, the door of it was closed. She put out her hand and touched the knob tentatively. She twirled it.

Then, suddenly smitten with a half suspicion, May undertook to open the safe door on its combination. She knew it perfectly—had known it ever since the strong-box was purchased and set up.

Holding the lamp which she had taken from Rylla, nearer to the plate, she turned the pointer to the first letter and listened for the click of the mechanism. There came no sound. She twirled the knob swiftly, then tried again.

With great care May halted the pointer on the letter. Again the tumbler failed to click. She moved the pointer on to the second letter of the combination. The mechanism failed to register!

Her trembling fingers carried through the succession of letters; there was not a sound in response, close as she held her ear to the plate. She possessed the patience to try, for a second time, the succession of letters; the result was the same.

May arose from her stooping position and placed the lamp upon the table. She stared stupidly from the safe door to Miz Sue's face.

"What's the matter?" demanded that young woman.

"It—it—— Why! The combination has been changed," May stammered. "I never heard of such a thing. I know it opened on the old combination yesterday. What can it mean? Why, Sue, somebody has been at this safe, has had it open, and has changed the mechanism."

"Opened Jack Stillson's safe? With all that money you said was in it?"

"Maybe it isn't in it now," said the perplexed May. "How can we know? If Jack was here——"

"Cat's foot! He couldn't open the safe either if the combination is changed."

"That is so. I don't know what to do. Do you suppose that masked man Mr. Jimson saw at the safe did rob it and changed the combination all in that short time?"

Miz Sue's tone was more than ordinarily scornful. "How do you know how long that fellow was here? You can't be-

lieve much a tin-horn like that Sandburr says. Maybe the two were in cahoots, but quarreled when it came to the job, and the other hombre shot this Jimson."

"Do you really think so?" May asked, her eyes widening.

"I don't say I think so; but it might be so. The only thing we actually are sure of is that you can't get into the safe; and until you can open it, you won't know if it has been robbed, or not."

Rylla was standing by wringing her plump hands. The men had taken the wounded Sandburr over to the bunkhouse for treatment, and the fat girl had shut the door.

"Oh, May Stillson! Oh, Miz Sue! You don't believe that my Larry would steal money, do you? I knew he's a perfect fool about spending his money; but he never would take a penny that wasn't his."

"Of course not," May told her, impatiently. "Don't be ridiculous—— Just the same," she added, "I wish Larry was here right now. Maybe he could explain something about it," was her distrustful conclusion.

WHEN morning came and Poke had not appeared, nor had the masked man of whom Sandburr talked so glibly been apprehended, the tongue of suspicion was aroused throughout the camp. Sandburr's voluble story of the supposed safe-breaker could not fail to impress the J S hands, and the gambler was vindicative enough to make his story sound very plausible. He even made the masked man's physical proportions match up with Poke Fellows' pecularities of figure.

The only thing that was "wrong with the picture," as Bud Knott pointed out, was the well-known fact that Poke Fellows never packed two guns. Sandburr's admission that the man who had wounded him handled a pair of Colts with marvelous skill worked in Poke's favor.

"I'll say," Bud observed with characteristic caution, "that the hombre that pinked Sandburr over his ribs must have done so with premeditation and forethought. If he was aiming to get away in a hurry, he put old Sandburr hawss-decomback, like the saying is. Sandburr won't do no saddlework with any comfort for a couple of weeks."

This fact being brought to Miz Sue's attention, that sharp young woman snapped it up as a morsel worth while.

"I never knew Larry Fellows to be smart enough to do a thing like that—to cripple this hombre so he can't ride away in a hurry. Why, goodness me! It seems like one of Jack Stillson's own tricks, I declare it does."

But Rylla Boggs took these asservations against Poke's character very seriously. May was also angry when she heard the talk. Her husband's old pal might be "a lunkhead" in the opinion of many people; but she was sure that he was faithful to Homer and his interests.

Poke's critical tongue was used merely to cloak a passionate fondness for Two-Gun Stillson, his hero and partner. May began, like Miz Sue, to feel that there was something actually wrong about the gambler, and especially with his story of the masked burglar.

She called Bud Knott into conference and learned for the first time the particulars of the gambling which had gone on among the hands since Homer's departure for Hatchersville. Without realizing that he was betraying any great secret, Bud told his employer's wife of the I. O. U. for two hundred dollars which Poke had given Sandburr to cover a part of his losses.

May was startled by this. She asked if Sandburr could come over to the office to see her.

"He'll come, Ma'am, or we'll bring him," Bud declared with energy.

So they had the gambler bolstered up in an armchair opposite the safe and spreading himself to ingratiate the womenfolk, when Poke at the head of the train from Hatchersville arrived at the encampment just at dusk.

The entire outfit looked pretty well done up, and the wagon tarp was shot to rags, while a team of only five mules made slow headway with the vehicle.

The marks of battle were confessed by bloody bandages upon several of the rid-

ers. Some horses, as well as the wounded mule, limped dejectedly in the caveyard, bringing up the rear of the procession. This was no victorious host returning from the wars.

"Oh, Larry!" cried May, running out to greet the party. "Where is Jack?"

"What's the matter with Two-Gun?" retorted Poke, for the moment startled.

"How did you come to be leading these boys? What has become of Jack Stillson?" repeated the worried ranchwoman. "Where were you last night? Do you know we had a safe robber here?"

"My soul!" exploded the lathy puncher. "You don't mean—— Where's that danged Sandburr?"

"Mr. Jimson was shot. He's in the office right now telling us about it. When is Jack coming back?"

"Ho-hum!" croaked Poke. "Two-Gun is delayed. Nawthin's done happened him—you needn't worry. *I'm* here, Miz May."

"But, Larry, we can't open the safe. We don't know whether it has been robbed or not. There was a masked man who shot Mr. Jimson and got away."

"Hell's bells!" exclaimed Poke, throwing his pony's reins to a waiting Mex boy. "Lemme see this Sandburr jasper."

He started for the office door where Rylla met him with open arms and a jabber of greeting. But Poke was in no mood for the "tender pash." He entered bruskly to find Miz Sue watching the wounded gambler with frowning gaze.

"Sit down, Larry," the mistress of the Parachute said, "and listen to the particulars of a story that will sure make your eyes pop. This gambling man tells a moving tale."

Sandburr frowned at Poke, licking his lips. "I don't aim to have my word doubted, Ma'am," he snarled.

"Indeed?" snapped Miz Sue. "Then you should improve your reputation for veracity—— Sit down, Larry, like I say. Listen to his story."

The two other girls had followed Poke into the office and the door was closed against the curious. With less assurance than previously, Sandburr repeated the details of his story. Of the gambler's intimation that the masked man might have been Poke Fellows himself, the latter's comment was quite illuminating:

"About that time I was a good ways down the trail. All these hombres I done brought in are witnesses. Two-Gun, too. This jasper ain't got nawthin' on me. Go on, you sidewinder," he added to the gambler.

As he listened to Sandburr's speculations upon the identity of the masked man, and how he had been shot by that person, Poke's usually melancholy visage began to wrinkle in a most surprising way. May added her information that the combination of the safe had been tampered with—she was convinced by the masked man.

"Why, Larry, we don't know whether Jack's money has been disturbed in the safe, or not," May complained.

The distorted countenance of the poker enthusiast at length developed a wide and unmistakable grin. His wrinkled eyelids narrowed and he chuckled deep in his throat.

"Oh, my soul!" he croaked. "This is sure rich—— So," he said to Sandburr, "that two-gun hombre nicked a rib for you on both sides, did he? And you ain't ridin' none for a while. Well, well! 'Twas almost as though he knowed yuh, Sandburr, and aimed you'd be sure to stay put. Hoh!"

"I don't know what yuh mean," growled out the sullen gambler.

"Yuh don't haftuh, hombre," retorted Poke, still broadly grinning at him. "Two-Gun says 'Rome wasn't built in a day,' and I reckon he's right. Some things work out slow—murder, for instance; but they do work out in the end. Things is comin' to a haid for you, Sandburr; and you'll wait yere till ol' Two-Gun comes back to square things with yuh."

(*To be concluded in the next issue.*)

A GET-TOGETHER DEPARTMENT FOR GENERAL SERVICE TO OUR READERS

Conducted by The Storekeeper

THE BARGAIN COUNTER

If you want to exchange something you have, but don't want, for something you want that someone else has, here is the place to do it. It must be understood that ACE-HIGH *cannot be held responsible for losses sustained by our readers.*

Announcements inserted free of charge, but they must not exceed 21 words inclusive of name and address, and must be either typed or hand-printed. Nothing but BONA FIDE trades acceptable; announcements of articles for sale will be ignored. State both what you have and what you want. Study examples of announcements in this issue for the proper way to draft yours.

The United States Government prohibits the mailing of firearms capable of being concealed on the person, therefore swaps of revolvers, pistols, etc., will not be published in The Bargain Counter.

Want Indian beadwork, relics, kodak, high-grade stamps. Have cheap stamps, jewelry, other goods. F. Soule, 604 Masonic Temple, Minneapolis, Minn.

Have .25-.20 and 16-ga. single shotgun. Want field glasses or high-power rifle. Albert Dralle, Menoken, N. Dak.

Want watch, bills, coins, etc. Have Indian beaded belts, necklaces, vests and relics. Mullis, 29 Barrow St., Rock Hills, S. C.

Exchange information on free homestead, good timber, land in Minnesota for stamp by homesteader. J. T. Dupriest, 961 W. 19th St., Chicago, Ill.

Have battery charger, sets of Kipling, Poe, Maupassant, Balzac. Want electric fan, large size, folding kodak, 2-ga. pumpgun. H. L. Bracken, 1863 W. 47th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

Want dolly about 24 inches tall, real hair, for wrist watch, ladies bags, beads. Joyce Alice Hankes, 18 14th Ave., So., St. Cloud, Minn.

Will trade chemicals and radio parts for stamps or coins, or what have you? Arthur Hild, 3597 W. 58th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

Have 55 Western magazines, 2 two-cell flashlights, jack knife, electric extension cords, plugs, tools. Want anything. Fred Belin, 3406 Powerhattan Ave., Tampa, Fla.

Trade your old broken watches and clocks for other articles. Send for list. George H. Birkebak, 1601 Snow Ave., Tampa, Fla.

Have stamps to exchange for arrowheads, coins, precancels, Indian relics, others. Give description, amount wanted. James Barker, 311 Park St., Bristol, Va.

Have Triplex auto knitter, complete. Want radio, poultry pet stock, or what? Francis T. Culdice, Argo, Ill.

Have Zane Grey's books and other Western books. Want "Ace-High" or "Cowboy Stories" for 1926. Lowell Breeden, R. 1, Hustonville, Ky.

Tear this slip off and mail it with your announcement—it entitles you to one *free* insertion in this Department. Announcements are limited to 21 words—trades only—no others considered. Announcements must be either typed or hand-printed.

Name .....

Street .....

City .....

(Void after October 18, 1927)

Have cornet, kodak, Mack motometer, ladies' wrist watch, portable victrola and records. Want wardrobe trunk, incubator, or? Mary Dudding, Box 748, Muskogee, Okla.

Have Dixie twin magneto, Atwater Kent coupled-circuit tuner variometer, adjustable speaker unit. Want binoculars, kodak, Ford generator, or? Miles Jostad, R. 1, Buttineau, N. D.

Have May, 1926, to last issue "Ace-High" magazines. Want steel traps, or what have you? Joe A. Kirk, Shelton, Wash.

Will exchange 500 mixed stamps for 10 postcard views of your city. E. Milklemm, 5034 28th Ave., Kenosha, Wis.

Have Ferry wonder telescope, 8-power. Want curios, relics, or? R. Reed, 114½ W. Market St., Warren, Ohio.

Have printing press and type, steel handcuffs, finger-print course, Ford tractor, tools, etc. Want typewriter, or? William Nelson, 931 W. 8th St., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Want all Indian relics. Have Indian and army relics, curios, minerals, fossils. List foot long. Dr. M. M. Lane, Box 113, Harvieli, Mo.

Have over 1,000 used and unused stamps. Want typewriter. Steven Soltesz, 2023 Dowd St., Lakewood, O.

Have piano tuning course, complete set of tools and books, worth over $100. What am I offered? Frank Klock, 1319 Race St., Ashland, Pa.

Have two new 33 x 4 tires, saxophone, Remington typewriter, radio, strength machine, electric sweeper, camp stove. Want automobile, or? J. O. Long, Patas Kala, Ohio.

Have stamps, camera, 2-tube radio, books and magazines, fishing tackle and curios. Want printing press, stamps, or? A. C. Schneider, 1003 E. Lincoln, Sapulpa, Okla.

Have Vibroplex telegraph sending machine to trade for folding kodak, or what offer? J. Connelly, 1121 Forest Ave., Woodfords, Me.

Have banjo-uke, jazzitha, radio parts, camera, or magazines. Want banjo-mandolin, guitar, telescope, or? Howard C. Dunbar, Blue Mond, Ill.

Want auto tools and accessories. Have big list of useful articles. Correspondence appreciated. H. C. Coskrey, R. 5, Troy, Ala.

Have strength course, formulas, 3-A Eastman kodak, boxing gloves. Want overhead valves or Ruxtel axle for Ford. H. H. Winch, 115 Drury Ave., Kissimee, Fla.

Want good motorcycle. Have 3-tube radio complete with tubes, batteries, speaker and charger. J. G. Prantner, 1606 23rd St., Milwaukee, Wis.

Want good rifle or carbine, Winchester, Krag or 303 Roes. Good exchange given. P. E. A. Conrad, Fisher's Ferry, Pa.

Have old newspaper, "Manila American," 1900 "Lee's Priceless Recipes," containing 3,000 formulas. Valuable. Want tenor banjo, and? B. V. Bernhart, Angel Island, Calif.

Stamps! stamps! I have thousands to exchange for Br. Colonies. Must catalogue 5 C. on basis of Scott's. W. E. Fischer, 1521 Chapel St., Dayton, Ohio.

Want music instruments, music instruction, pets. Have field glasses, canary (good home for a baby). Write Mrs. Ruby Fairchild, Waldport, Ore.

Have uke and instructions, muscle developer, flashlight, electric soldering iron, opera glasses, and tools. Want portable phonograph, or? J. Miller, 2734 4th St., Detroit, Mich.

Have a specialty collection of United States, British and British Colonial stamps. What have you? H. G. Offerle, 7744 Ferndale Ave., Detroit, Mich.

Want .22 rifle. What do you want? A. W. Newton, 6115 Torresdale Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.

Have 40 acres improved on highway near town, for farm in New Mexico or Arizona. O. R. Dentorn, R. 3, Durant, Okla.

Have Eastman 3½ film tank, 2 folding kodaks, developing and printing outfit, telescopes, 8-power binoculars, etc. Fred Lewis, Creighton, So. Dak.

Have very effective chemical powder fire extinguishers for field glasses, radio equipment, or autographic kodak, or? H. F. Gale, Hunter, N. Dak.

Have lots of goods to trade for monkey or male Chihuahua dog. W. I. Hooker, Box 742, High Point, N. C.

Have gas and electric flat irons and washing machine motor. What have you? I. H. Cone, R. 1, Hot Springs, S. C.

Have banjo, wrist watch, postcard views and other articles. Want stamps, or? Send list. D. Hannon, 618 W. North, New Castle, Pa.

Have motion-picture film. My list for yours. None over 300 ft. wanted. Joseph Grenetz, 121 So. Peach St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Have MacFadden's encyclopedia of physical culture, 5 volumes complete. Want portable typewriter, camera, or? Sandy Gordon, patchogue Inn, Patchogue, Long Island, N. Y.

Have L. C. Smith typewriter, camera, radio parts, violin, .22 Winchester rifle, etc. What have you? George Hush, Tulane Rd., Columbus, Ohio.

Have the cowboy poem, "A Bar-4 Bluffer," to trade for your name and a stamp. Stoney, Box 785, Worcester, Mass.

Want U. S. Commemorative coins, 1793 half cent, 1793 large cent, and 1856 small cent. What do you want? E. C. Townsend, Box 184, Clifton, Texas.

Want ¼ H. P. 110-volt 60-cycle A. C. motor. What do you want? J. E. MacCain, Box 125, Comanche, Texas.

Have K. of P. uniform, rank sword, and leather case. Want Luger, or what have you? M. J. Nulf, 205 W. Martin St., E. Palestine, Ohio.

Have 25 sheets jazz music to swap for 25 others, also books, magazines. Want magazines. Jack Rogers, R. D. 1, Coraopolis, Pa.

Trade 12-ga. Winchester pump, "Ace-High," and other magazines. Want radio parts for short wave receiver. Erlandson, Erhard, Minn.

Want old coins. Will trade stamps in exchange. Send your list. Steven Soltesz, 2023 Dowd St., Lakewood, Ohio.

Have German and Hungarian bonds and bank notes to trade. Leon Achuff, 257 Water St., Paterson, N. J.

Have magazines, crystal set, 2-tube set, for best offer. Charles Boyle, 365 Knight St., Providence, R. I.

Have stamps of all nations, motors, rifle, arrowheads. Want firearms. H. J. Weber, 2639 Gravois Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Have Chicago show radio lamp, Phanstiel B-eliminator, Hercules battery, rubber case, speaker and shade. Want B-flat tenor or E-flat baritone sax. E. W. Hedstrom, 3011 Elizabeth Ave., Zion, Ill.

Have magazines, .50-.70 rifle, shock absorbers, Ford parts, cigarette cases, rings, dark lantern, bayonet and sheath. Want airedale pup, or? Ed. Johnson, Box 129, Wilson, N. Y.

Want movie machine or movie camera. What do you want? William B. Mahon, R. F. D. 1, Watertown, New York.

Have two D. C. motors, electrical goods, radios and supplies. Want outboard motor, canoe, Graflex camera. J. F. Furey, 50 Williams St., Hartford, Conn.

Have California souvenirs, folders, Chinese curios $2, Hawaiian guitar, tenor banjo. Want old coins, Indian relics, stones, jewelry. Carl Smith, Richmond, Calif.

Will exchange 6-volt generator, D. C. and f5.8 lens for a motorcycle in any condition; motor must work. Harry Goodman, 341 Queen St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Have 10-volume Winston's loose-leaf encyclopedia, greeting cards, novelties, stationery. What have you? Michael G. Mueller, Box 5, Newport, Minn.

Have 92 acres farm here valued at $1,500. Will trade for small farm of the same value. Max Price, Patrick, N. C.

Have French art photos, rings worth 75c. each. Want anything. Send particulars. Carroll Patterson, Whitewood, S. Dak.

Have good trapping methods. Want stamp collections. W. Adams, c. o. George Keyes, R. 1. Stevenson, B. C., Canada.

Have 303 Ross rifle, 30 shells, fine condition, .22 Stevens rifle, telegraph sounder and key. Want typewriter, or? W. O. Ridgway, Judith Gap, Mont.

Have hundreds of fiction and non-fiction books, sporting goods, etc. Want traffic inspector and finger-print books of all kinds. L. H. Cone, R. 1, Hot Springs, S. D.

Have old gold and silver coins to trade for old copper and colonial coins. M. E. Brown, 2951 Lycast Ave., Detroit, Mich.

Have Dodge sport model touring car, like new, Chevrolet starter. Want land in Kentucky, or West, or? A. T. Moyel, R. F. D. 2, Johnson City, N. Y.

Have pedigreed English foxhound value $75. Want typewriter, watch, law course, diamond, or anything of equal value. George Seanor, 298 Marston St., Detroit, Mich.

Have breaking plow, banjo-uke, work harness, gas lamp, Stewart speedometer, and taxidermist course. Want? Barney Stellmach, Foreston, Minn.

Have field glasses, case. Want large field glasses. Virginia L. Marshall, Foster, Neb.

Have shell belt, pictures of birds. Send for list. Want relics, beadwork, horsehair goods, and offers. L. Hubartt, 2 N. Linden St., Sapulpa, Okla.

Have books, magazines and boxing gloves. Want foreign or old U. S. coins. William Gallagher, 3063 Tulip St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Have tenor-banjo, ball gum machine, cartoon and photoplay courses, showcard supplies, cut-making outfit, etc. What have you? Barney Gookin, Clifton Forge, Va.

Have drafting table, tools, typewriter, 12-ga. .22 repeater, duplicator, mail order, books and formulas. What have you? W. W. Jones, Box 248, Omega, Okla.

Have books, magazines, J. C. S. special poultry course, educational books, flashlight. Want 4-tube radio, poultry books, magazines, etc. Clyde Pherigo, R. F. D. 2, Newton, Iowa.

Have oil town lot, 150 postcard and panoramic views, oil field, framed art pictures. Want lake-front land. E. W. Mahan, Box 1, Borger, Tex.

Have 550-volt transformer, Raytheon and 210-power tube. Want small calibre Luger automatic. F. W. Harney, 320 W. 45th St., New York City.

Have Burns' physical culture and wrestling course book, super-strength and new punching-bag. Want Titus course and apparatus. John Milander, 70 2nd St., Hokendaugua, Pa.

Want Indian curios, beadwork, Stone Age relics, old books on Indians, old knives, daggers, firearms. Anything in exchange. A. G. Heath, 444 E. 42nd St., Chicago, Ill.

Have Winchester, model 1890, Westinghouse 8-tube radio, model R. A. What have you? H. MacLeod, Jr., Hickory St., Sea Ford, N. Y.

Have 16-ga. La Fever double for 20-ga. Ithaca Brunswick parlor pool table for .250 Savage lever. Grant Riesland, Chilco, Idaho.

Have set of boxing gloves, rawhide whip 7 feet long. Want uke or what have you? Walter T. Lewis, R. 8, Paris, Tenn.

Want watch, camera, .410 pistol, kodaks, wrist watches, diamonds. Offer, necklaces, or? Box 733, Valley City, N. Dak.

Have boxing gloves, crystal set radio, headphones. Want folding camera, banjo-uke, or? Dwight Thompson, R. 1, Box 52, Phoenix, Ariz.

Want candy course and candy mfg. equipment, showcases, confectionery goods, radio parts, sets. Have oil stocks, real estate, car parts, etc. Ora Davis, 122 Sherden Ave., Clarksburg, Va.

Want Omnigraph No. 2, complete. Have binoculars, camp equipment. R. Welker, 406 N. Harvey Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

Want drafting set and supplies, also anything electrical. Have about 100 articles to trade. Send list. A. J. Davis, 1004 Eynon St., Scranton, Pa.

Have radio tubes, ice skates, hair clipper, mine shares, 31-key accordion. Want violin, radio, or? Abram Lang, 341 Caledonia St., Calomet, Mich.

Have Washington School of Art course, would like folding camera, musical instrument, or? C. C. Bowman, Box T, Taft, Calif.

Have Eastman autographic kodak, steel case, value $15.00 Want complete set golf clubs and good bag. L. L. Harvey, 6924 S. Maplewood Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Will trade cowboy or Western songs and poems. Send list. Will also trade stamps with small collectors. Fred J. Stygar, 5319 S. Talman Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Have gas engines, 110/220 motors, ice skates, boxing gloves. Want real estate, radio, or? P. B. McGary, 1014 W. 2nd St., Dayton, Ohio.

Have three dozen steel traps. Want dark female skunk, deodorized, or ferret, or what have you? Robert Wright, Atlantic, Iowa.

New Mexico, snow-capped mountains, hunters' paradise, 100 acres level valley land. Want fur bearers, poultry, or what? Harvey Foster, Capitan, New Mexico.

Want .22 rifle, Indian, Western stuff, specimens for my room. What do you want? Eugene Schmall, 3456 N. Kildare Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Have Parker Bros. 10-ga. hammer shotgun for tenor banjo. New Oliver typewriter for offer. W. Anderson, Summitville, Tenn.

Have Charles McMahon's course in physical culture. Want police or bull dog, or? W. C. Hall, Box 146, Tupelo, Miss.

Have 8-tube radio, distance getter, Magnavox loud speaker unit, good as two stages amplification. Want .22 repeater Winchester or Remington. S. Gauldenstein, 2060 Crotona Parkway, New York City.

Have 12-ga. double shotgun, long tom, hen incubator and banjo-uke. What have you? Francis F. Morgan, Madisonville, La.

Have Civil War sabres, various swords, curios, relics, Oliver typewriter. Want diamonds, watch, jewelry, rifles, or? Robert Abels, 55 Mt. Hope Pl., New York City.

Will exchange tooth paste or tooth brushes for old gold false teeth, or what do you want? S. Walsh, 5 5th St., Chelsea; Mass.

Have genuine Indian beaded sheepskin belts, vests, riding cuffs, hatbands, etc. Send list. The Mullis Exchange Club, 29 Barrow St., Rock Hill, S. C.

Have pedigreed cross-bred police pups, hunting and working stock. Want hunting, fishing, musical goods, or? Roy Predmore, L. B. 342, Fords, N. J.

Have 40 a., cabin, fencing, water, near town. Want small place one to two miles out of town. F. G. Maile, Harrison, Ark.

Have Indian arrowheads, and old bayonette. Want portable typewriter, binoculars, trickle charger, or what? H. Morat, Box 1089, Louisville, Ky.

Have golf clubs, boxing gloves, radio parts. Want kodak, .22 rifles, or what? David Bennett, Noyac Road, Sag Harbor, N. Y.

Have old magazines, valuable mineral collections to order, old books, fiction, scientific, poetry, school. Want band instruments, or? E. H. Ramme, 124 W. 3rd St., Leadville, Colo.

Have Klaxon horns No. 20, regular size, crescent shock absorbers, model F-6, 3-tube Ambassador radio. Want young Boston bitch, or? O. A. Thie, 763 Park Ave., West New York, N. J.

Have binoculars, .22 rifles, radio parts, magazines, catcher's mitt. Want rifle, motorcycle, or? John Bland, Strasburg, Ill.

Have fiction and non-fiction books. Want books on short story writing and old coins minted before 1823. George Filchock, Box 53, Brasnell, Pa.

Have 100 books (adventure). Want Derringer, swords, curios, coins, or? R. L. Reed, 114½ W. Market St., Warren, O.

Have stamps, phonograph. Want genuine Indian skull, watches, violin, banjos. Milo Howard, R. 2, Box 32, Houlton, Me.

Want banjo. Swap 2 kodaks, 2¼ x 3¼, one brand new. Neal Maddux, Cross Plains, Texas.

Have 4-cylinder Buick parts, turtle shell, assorted magazines. What have you? Anything useful. John Kavolius, 30 Revere Court, Canton, Mass.

Have a broken bird bitch, 4 years old. Want coon dog. Elmar H. Cuttrell, 411 1st St., West Belmar, N. J.

Have baseball suit, size 38, shoes 8, catcher's mitt, glove, mask, bats. What have you in firearms or fishing tackle? A. L. Inglee, 13½ Allen St., Hudson Falls, N. Y.

Have radio parts, bicycle, .22 Winchester pump, $8, pair football shoes, size 9. Want motorcycle and parts or aviation course. Harry Knapp, Balmorhea, Texas.

Will give stamps for United Profit coupons. Want postal card size camera. A. F. Helinski, 122 S. Potomac St., Baltimore, Md.

Have 1836 army musket, fine Afghan 3-edged Kikrie sword, blade 2 ft. 6 inches, skates and shoes (7). Want radio, Crosman rifle, or? H. F. Ponting, R. F. D. 2, Sewickley, Pa.

Have radio, magazines, typewriter, razors, etc. Want banjo, magazines, or what have you? A. C. Morris, Larkinsville, Ala.

Have .41 Swiss repeating rifle, also one course new—entitled Success Nuggets, 11 booklets. Want I. C. S. course in bookkeeping, or? Roy Peterson, Maple, Wis.

Have kodak, new hunting knife, sheath, $15.00 watch, shaving outfit. Want cowboy clothes, anything. Colin Cross, Perth Road, Ontario, Canada.

Have watches, Regina music box, and 18-inch records Stereopticon, 200 colored slides, 60 old copper coins. Send your list. G. H. Birkebak, 1601 Snow Ave., Tampa, Fla.

Will swap 3 view cards or a Sapulpa paper for a newspaper of your city. Trade? Send yours. C. C. Cooper, 903 E. Hobson St., Sapulpa, Okla.

Have Indian motorcycle, model 1922 Scout, in A-1 shape. What have you? Raymond Honken, Thompson, Iowa.

Have American Legion and other magazines to exchange for Guy Empey's book "Over the Top." W. J. Hoggle, Box 29, Havana, Ala.

Have formulas, recipes and processes. Trade for anything of $100 value. Charles Schneider, 1811 Sedgwick St., Chicago, Ill.

Have German army field glasses, set Theo. Audel electrical books, American technical society's encyclopedia of engineering, and automobile cylinder borer. C. E. Bird, 516 Tennessee Ave., Pineville, Ky.

Have Grebe C. R. 9 with tubes, no batteries. Want 12 or 16 pump, or what have you? W. A. Hodges, 505 N. Cedar St., Mishawaka, Ind.

Have Stevens .22 repeater, Win. 95 model, .30-.06 in good shape. Want Trapor repeater, 12-ga. L. H. Barber, Pataskala, Ohio.

Have cowboy's silver mounted bucking belt, like new, value $5.00, also horsehair hatband, value $2.50. Want offers. H. E. Stone, Box 785, Worcester, Mass.

Have cash register, coffee urn, griddle steamer, hot plate, soda fountain, flavors, fruits, etc. Chinaware wanted, anything. J. Dalton, Wellsville, Ohio.

Have 3-octave Deagon xylophone with resonators and case 1-minute camera with tripod, showcard course. What have you? T. J. Vecchio, Box 203, West Point, N. Y.

Have old coins, 50 National Geographic magazines, folding kodak, electric lantern, old and new books, 2-speed fishing reel. Best offer. R. Terwilliger, 4 Kinney St., Binghamton, N. Y.

Have tattooing outfit, stocking knitter, tools, firearms, radio, violin, movie machine, etc. Offers? Albert Eyre, 1036 N. 25th St., Camden, N. J.

Would like to exchange Indian Chief motorcycle and side car, also auto knitter for cheap land in West. Alina Drew, 17 Longley St., Marlboro, Mass.

Want auto or motorcycle, value $75.00. Have good saxophone outfit, Conn B-flat tenor. Sidney Mayle, Box 332, Pursglove, W. Va.

Want binoculars, motion-picture camera. Have radio parts of all kinds. Send for list. Harry J. Moss, 708 W. 55th St., Chicago, Ill.

Have radio parts, Ford starter and generator. Want .22 repeating rifle, or? Henry C. Burkart, Box 286, Port Neches, Texas.

Have .22 and .32 rifles, Acousticon, radio parts, Harley-Davidson motorcycle parts, magazines, for banjo, guitar, or anything. Floyd Stipe, Beebe, Ark.

I will exchange postcards of my town for postcards of your town. Henry Katz, Box 375, Bishopville, S. C.

Have Ansco V. P. folding kodak, fast anastigmat lens with leather pocket case. Want good shotgun, or? Erwin Wemett, Springwater, N. Y.

Want crystal gazers' crystal, guitar, rifle, and books on hypnotism. Have radio parts and magazines. What do you want? J. R. Gladin, Jr., 625 E. 57th St., Jacksonville, Fla.

Have beagles, old novels, small antiques, arrowheads wanted. Big swap list. B. F. Press, 3432 N. Bodine St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Have two new "Vita" battery chargers without bulbs, never used. Want good shotgun or gold watch. H. Bracken, 1863 W. 47th St., Cleveland, O.

Have linemen's climbers, sheepskin vest, civil service coaching lessons. Want leather jacket or anything. Ray Johnson, c/o C. D. Cass, Aurora, Neb.

Want perennial flowers or shrubs. Have lots of magazines and books. Grace Bourne, 4087 Lawrence Ave., Detroit, Mich.

Have Zenith radio, loud speaker, trickle charger, 10 Rohmer books, boxing gloves. Want E-flat alto saxophone, or? R. W. Rapier, Box 116, Carmel, Calif.

Have new Remington .30 cal. rifle, Oliver typewriter (new), swords, and gas masks. Want tenor banjo, saxophone, or h. p. rifle. Lawrence Laur, Box 134, Dryden, Mich.

Have 1 pair tame owls, ground squirrels, hawks, and 1 full-bred English bulldog bitch. Want modern firearms or typewriter. George Wildnick, 33 Maple St., Addison, N. Y.

Have La Salle law course, complete. Want portable Victor victrola, or what have you? R. E. Hoffstetter, Box 1, Mishawaka, Ind.

Have carpenter tools, Page Lewis .22 rifle, baseball glove and radio parts. Want bicycle or musical instruments. What have you? Wayne Cox, Box 51, Hico, Texas.

Have over 6,000 duplicate U. S. and foreign stamps to trade and 100 old coins. Want other stamps. E. Woestendick, 1441 So. Crawford Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Have 50 H. P. Gnome, 45 H. P. new aeroplane motors, Rhemus monkey, and 1,000 other articles. Want pool table, or? W. F. O'Brien, Pierceton, Ind.

Have books, post climbers, the largest coin besides others. Want telescope, or? William Townley, 1679 Montana Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Want American Boy magazines between years 1905 and 1924. Have magazines, books, or what do you want? Fred R. Andrus, Route 1, Washington, La.

Will give one set 10 wood drills for every Western clothbound novel sent me. Joseph Duhaine, Box 30, Coventry, R. I.

Exchange violin made 1742, Willis light plant, 32-volt northern, 125-volt generator electric washing machine. J. Zenz, Lancaster, Wis.

Have tapestry, antique player piano, coins, .22 rifle and lots of antique relics. Want diamonds. Howard Nash, 525 Harvard St., Vineland, N. J.

Have over 50 books by Grey, Bower, Webster's revised, unabridged dictionary. Want Websters new International dictionary. T. O. Palmer, R. 2, Duncan, Okla.

Have Holton-Clarke cornet and case. Want .30 or .32 Winchester, Marlin, Remington or Savage. N. E. Spicklemire, 1804 Locust St., Chico, Calif.

Want vestpocket autographic, victrola records, sets of books, or what? Have courses, patent, kodak, magazines, etc. Adam Quenzer, 315 Barbey St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Have field glasses, radio parts, baby chicks, books, English leghorn hatching eggs. Want holster, .32-.20 Winchester rifle, or? Joe Head, Box 1233, Tonhawa, Okla.

Beery breaking harness, new Marlin .22 smokeless bl. 97 model for Bolt .45 D. A., new condition. P. J. Quinlevan, 413 Jackson St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Have 43 maps, never used, 1 Tobin D. B. hammerless 12-ga. shotgun. Want tanned buckskin and Indian goods. B. W. Hazen, 1061 Cragmont Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

Have tattooing outfit, old Pewter statues, old magazines, 1892-1895 criticisms of Sullivan-Corbett fight. What have you? Charles Pomisel, 300 E. 70th St., New York City.

Have radio parts. Want auto repair course, A. T. S. auto engineering library, noteless player for uke, guitar, mandolin. F. Kirkpatrick, Lost Hills, Calif.

Will trade $8.00 uke for folding kodak, or what have you? Richard Petgen, 1045 Swinney Ave., Fort Wayne, Ind.

Want electric tattooing outfit and supplies, folding kodak, albums, taxidermist tools, developing outfits. What do you want? Ol W. Crowell, U. S. S. "Sandpiper," c/o P. M., New York City.

Have gem arrowheads, flint knives, Navajo rugs. What have you? Clarence E. Knudson, 221 S. 2nd St., Sterling, Colo.

Have complete Titus progressive exerciser. Want kodak, preferably one taking pictures somewhere about 2¼ x 3¼. L. M. Pinney, 406 Briggs St., Harrisburg, Pa.

Have many books, Western magazines, watch. Want .22 rifle in good condition. Glenn Jones, 42 Adams St., Chilton, Wis.

Have new uke outfit with extras to trade for good secondhand bicycle complete to ride. Lester Handy, R. 1, Holloway, Mich.

Have cycle hatcher, 2-burner blue flame oil stove and oven, also boy's bicycle. Want good radio. Charles Briggs, Spencer, Mass.

Have Charles MacMahon's body building course, tumbling course, and spring exerciser with charts. Want Arthur Murray Ballroom course, or? H. H. Bruehl, 801 2nd Ave., Long Island City, New York.

Have 25 novels and Seneca camera in good condition with complete developing and printing outfit. Will consider any offer. E. Campbell, 419 Pecan St., Carlinville, Ill.

I will send 10 different foreign stamps for every old U. S. stamp before 1880 sent me, also approvals, etc. F. Jackson, 2101 6th Ave., No., Birmingham, Ala.

Have very old pistol, knapsack, scout axe, mess kit, dagger, cowboy vest, spurs. Want boots, size 7 saddle, and .30-.30 carbine. Jack Kullin, Gonzales, Tex.

Have golden Seabright bantams, Pit games, Homer pigeons. Want hounds, or what have you? W. Lawhon, Cartersville, Ga.

Have Farmer Burns wrestling course, Arthur Murray's dancing lessons, course in mastery of speech by F. H. Law, Wells' History of the World, etc. Jos. Gay, 427 S. 13th St., Escanaba, Mich.

Want any tools and goods for workshop or den. Have a horde of things to trade. Satisfaction guaranteed. List for mine. A. J. Davis, rear 1004 Eynon St., Scranton, Pa.

Have books on bookkeeping, business, etc. Want books, violin music, stamps, or? E. M. Jackson, 115 W. Holston Ave., Johnson City, Tenn.

Have pool table, radio in console, cameras, books, hall clock, etc. What have you? J. A. Bridges, 314 S. 9th St., Ironton, Ohio.

Have railway mail clerk and penmanship courses to trade for Liedermann course or what have you? L. H. Bell, 201 E. Juniata St., Hays, Kans.

Have books, old coins, gold watch chain, Seth Thomas watch needing repair. Want game chickens, or? Roy Kimbrough, 501 E. Juan Linn St., Victoria, Texas.

Have .30-.30, watches, auto mechanics and electrical books and sporting goods. Want complete radio, small printing press, or? Dan Gray, White Star, Ky.

Will swap newspaper of Canton for one of your town. Send. F. Smith, 820 Richard Pl., N. W., Canton, Ohio.

Have watches, stamps, sword, radio. Want good male beagle rabbit hound. Milo Howard, R. 2, Box 32, Houlton, Me.

Have a beginner's telegraph set, baseball outfit, binoculars, etc. Want course in stage acting or motion-picture course. Michael Bilicy, 4302 Bailey Ave., Cleveland, O.

Have Ford generator, baritone horn, old-time 5-string banjo, 4 x 5 plate camera. Want .12 pumpgun, trumpet, cornet, tenor banjo. E. W. Martin, Box 22, Fairchild, Wis.

Have N. S. T. A. sales course, 9 volumes. Want outboard motor. H. Cunningham, 637 Parker Ave., Indianapolis, Ind.

Have letter-size duplicators, makes 50 to 100 copies of pen or typewritten originals. Everett Bevard, 381 N. 11th St., Columbus, Ohio.

New radio sets, outfits, homewoven rugs, poultry, Chinchilla rabbits, typewriters, Fords. What do you want? Mrs. Sybel Roark, Box 179, East Barre, Vt.

Tent, watches, ring, field glasses and other articles to trade for Indian relics, or? Merten Denney, Box 315, Dallas, Texas.

Have fresh water pearls. Want all coins. What have you? H. W. Murphy, Box 285, Yazoo City, Miss.

Have .22 Winchester Special .22 bolt action, new. Want telescope, field glasses, .22 target gun, or? J. De Yonge, Jr., Rushmore, Minn.

Have cowboy chaps, 27-inch, inseam 10-inch, bat wing. Want flower-stamped tapaderos at least 16 inches long. M. McCauley, Jr., 9th Ave., N., Box 752, Hopkins, Minn.

Want Frank Leslie's magazine for January and February 1887. Have old magazines and books to exchange or curios. Mrs. Frank Housman, Box 80, Fairfield, Idaho.

Have Indian beadwork and other relics. What have you? Herman Haas, Akeley, Minn.

Have expensive compass, pocket calculator. Want radio, or? H. E. Waldon, Co. "B," 23rd Infantry, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas.

Will trade reel, line, steel pole, and bayonet for binoculars, Texas steer horns, or? George Maksem, Lexington Ave., Youngstown, Ohio.

Have tattoo set, tattoo remover formula, violin, mandolin, photo outfit, etc. What is offered? Raymond Tipp, 662 No. Park St., Alliance, Ohio.

Male and female canaries to trade for others or for fox and cat squirrels. D. Riedel, Box 468, Kissimmee, Fla.

Have magazines, cartoons, lasso, new Gillette safety razor, cartoonist's manual, collection on dogs, aviation, artists. What have you? Nelson Williams, 1306 Center St., Effingham, Ill.

Pool table, E. T. Burrows, ½ size, with cues. Want field glasses, or what have you? F. F. Parshall, 311 Williams St., Jackson, Mich.

Have 1-tube radio, earphones, magazines, stamps. Want Indian relics, curios, books, or? Paul D. Hess, rear 93 19th St., Wheeling, W. Va.

Have pennants, souvenirs, buttons and badges, extension cords, trombone course, for what? Doc. Springer, 2500 S. Marne, Los Angeles, Calif.

Want movie camera. Have slide rule, radio, track shoes, football shoes, boxing gloves. Jack Moore, 418 South 10th St., Corvallis, Ore.

How many clothbound novels do you want for a .22 calibre rifle? Or what? Write. E. M. Duhaine, Coventry, R. I.

Have property in Lakeworth, Fla., on the Atlantic Ocean for property in or near Denver, Colo. Ward Skeen, Box 1375, Lake Worth, Fla.

Will trade foreign stamps and fielders' glove. Write. Stevens Soltesz, 2023 Dowd St., Lakewood, Ohio.

Have cameras, printing press, photo and auto parts, radios and parts. Want typewriter, or? E. L. Hernault, 517 W. 151st St., New York City.

Have stamps and coins. Will trade for autographed letters of noted persons. W. Swanson, 28 5th St., Weehawken, N. J.

Have $20 movie camera. Want young raccoon, tent, tenor banjo, motorcycle, or what have you? R. M. Stephen, 4th Ave., East, Assiniboia, Sask., Canada.

Want typewriter in A-1 condition. Have 12-ga. shotgun, like new, and other articles. Robert Hammond, 21 McNair Ave., Hartsville, S. C.

Want swords, daggers, arrows, curios. Have books, magazines, stamps, 17-jewel watch, deer horns, Indian relics. Edmund Budde, Jr., 4313 Katonah Ave., Bronx, New York.

Want male German shepherd pup. What do you want? James Sadd, Y. M. C. A., Easton, Pa.

Have Goliath mouth organ, 48 reeds, 12-ga. single shot, 15 arrow points. What have you? Charlie Scholl, Castlewood, So. Dak.

Have pool table, radio, razors, mission hall clock, cameras and supplies. Want show property or what have you? Bridges, 314 So. 9th St., Ironton, Ohio.

Have $150 Wurlitzer "C" melody saxophone, excellent condition, gold and silver plated, instructions. What have you? K. H. Bricker, 469 W. Princess St., York, Pa.

Have $65 Bosch magneto with impulse starter to swap for what? Frankie Jopnson, 23 Grove St., Minneapolis, Minn.

Have tools, firearms, sporting goods, radios, knitter, saxophone, antiques, etc. What have you? Albert Eyre, 1036 N. 25th St., Camden, N. J.

Have 21-jewel watch. Want Remington, or? Hugh F. Adkins, Salt Rock, W. Va.

Have a course of 96 violin lessons, value $96. Want clarinet, 5-tube radio set, Professor Kline's course, or? M. M. Monette, Box 42, Janout, P. O., Manitoba, Canada.

Have guns, watches, tools, radio tubes, Eversharp, racing bicycle and parts, stamps, medals, skates, etc. Want anything. Henry Weisenberg, 913 S. 14th St., Kansas City, Kans.

Have tennis rackets, air guns, flashlights, radio parts, motors, etc. Want spark coils, transformers, etc. William De Plautt, 620 W. 116th St., New York City.

Have 640 acres of land in Presidio County, Texas. Exchange for anything of value. John Jewel, Elroy, Wis.

WANTED—INFORMATION

Are you looking for any one who has been missing for a long time? If so, write down all particulars and we will gladly publish your notice in ACE-HIGH. *Notices may be listed anonymously if you so desire. Before taking action concerning any answers received, be sure to lay the matter before us. We assume no responsibility for this department. Do not send any money to strangers. Notify us at once when you have found your man.*

ANONA—Send your address to "Bobs," c/o "Ace-High" Magazine.

ZACHARDA, FRANK, and KATHERINE ZACHARDA, Left Owosso, Mich., in 1913 with their mother. The girl is now 16 and supposed to be married, her marriage name being Mrs. Fred Cornell. The boy is 20 years old, but he does not go under his father's name, and is somewhere up north. They say that their mother is dead. Anyone knowing of their whereabouts will please communicate with Mr. Frank Zacharda, 1114 Factory St., Owosso, Mich.

KENNETH, write or come home at once. Everything O. K. and forgiven. The suspense is killing mamma. C. A. Simmons, Box 276, Pleasanton, Kans.

ANYONE related to Tony Cain please write to J. F. Cain, his lonely son as he would like to hear from some of them as soon as possible. His father's people lived in the Southern part of Tennessee and he was killed at Henderson, Ky., in 1904. J. T. Cain, Madisonville, Ky.

JACK L. MORAN, write to your old pal, S. F. Sebolt, U.S.S. "Pittsburgh," Box 13-S, Asiatic Fleet, c/p P. M., Seattle, Wash.

A. J. B.—Please come home. We all love you. M. J. B., New Haven, Conn.

COX, ROY—Left his home in Kentucky in 1911, age 17 years old, weight 182 pounds, 5 feet tall, dark brown hair. He joined the Standing Army for 5 years and was missing, he has been gone 16 years. Mrs. Caroline Cox, Regina, Ky.

BALLWANZ, RUTH—Dear little Ruth, write me soon for I am getting very lonesome without hearing from you. Horace Vogele, R. No. 2, Kaw City, Okla.

MULLEN, JOHN JOSEPH—Of Roxbury, Mass. He left Roxbury 1917 and was last heard from in December, 1925 at Detroit, Mich. He was also known to be in Cleveland, Ohio in 1924. He has three brothers, Matthew J., Thomas J., and William Mullen, and four sisters, Mary, Catherine, Alice, and Evelyn. His mother's name is Bridget. Anyone knowing his whereabouts will please write to his sister Mrs. Edward Hines, 26 Worcester St., Boston, Mass., or Mrs. Mae Egan, 63 Wensley St., Roxbury, Mass.

MRS. F. VAUGHAN, my mother (Madame Vaughan), of French extraction, wife of Mr. Robert Vaughan, jeweler, of Commercial W. Newport, England, left Jamaica where she kept a restaurant in the year 1905 and went to South America. Can anyone let me know how I may trace my mother? V. H. Vaughan, Lawrence Lane, Old Hills, Hants, England.

BLACK, FRANK H.—Medium height, brunette, gray-blue eyes, medium complexion. Last heard of he was in Los Angeles, California in 1923. He has been in the West for the past 13 years. He has always followed office work. Since his father's death on September 5th, 1925, his sister has been trying to locate him. Any information would be appreciated. Lura Black, Box 174, Geneva, Ala.

ROSA HOLLAND, write to your brother, or anyone who knows anything about where she is, left Nash county years ago, please write J. W. Holland, R. No. 3, Nashville, N. C.

NEAL, FRANCES—Last heard of in Liverpool, Ohio. All the letters I wrote returned unclaimed. Does anyone know of her whereabouts? I will appreciate any news concerning Miss Neal. Horace Vogele, R. No. 2, Kaw City, Okla.

MACDONELL, HUGHIE—Formally of Mahoney City, Pa., last heard of in Chicago fifteen years ago. His niece Annie Crossan would like to hear from him. Mrs. Annie De Marrow, 2158 Furley St., Philadelphia, Pa.

HAMRICK, HARLEY, ROBERT—Age 27, five feet seven inches tall, broad shoulders, dark red hair and eyes, fair complexion, heavy build weighing 170 pounds. He left home about 7 years ago and has not been heard of since. Anyone knowing of his whereabouts will please communicate with his mother. Mrs. Hamrick, Lowsville, W. Va.

AROUND THE STOVE

LIKES STORIES OF INDIANS

Dear Editor:

Find enclosed my ballot of the authors I think did the best stories in your second May issue. Also may I ask you a question how come I never see anything in a Western magazine about Buffalo Bill? I was born in central Kansas in '89, and have had the honor of meeting Buffalo Bill's Pardner, the only man that survived Buffalo Bill's three first trips across Kansas on a freighter wagon. He is dead now. Died in St. Louis in 1909.

His name was Charles Holcroft. He was 75 years old when he died, he boarded with my mother in 1904 and '05 at Cuba, Mo., when we lived there. How he would sit up until midnight and tell stories that would make the hair raise on your head—telling stories about Indian fights! I remember one he told, especially—of him being in a dugout with Buffalo and one colored man, and the Indians attacked the fort on horses.

The colored man loaded the muskets for the other two men. They killed about 9 or 10 Redskins, and finally the Indians got real close to the dugout and Buffalo got the chief, and the rest retreated.

He also said they had some terrible hardships in these first trips across the plains. They went some two and three days without food or water; had to always keep an eye open for Indians, sleep out in their wagons through any kind of weather, and the only kind of guns were the army muskets.

Buffalo was of a real wild nature and was always in a jolly mood. He also was a Civil War veteran and drew a pension.

I also remember a story he used to tell about a deaf man out squirrel hunting. A deaf man was hunting squirrels, and a traveling man came along and asked him how far it was to the next town. The deaf man thought he asked him where his squirrel was, and he said up in that hole in a hollow tree. The traveling man says, "You must think I am a dawn fool," and the deaf guy says, "Yes, the woods are full of them."

Well, as I ain't no author, I won't try to write a story about Buffalo Bill, but would like to find Henry Holcroft, Charles' son. He might be able to write a good long story about Indian fights.

BILL BAILEY.

116 N. Sherman Street, Lincoln, Ill.

P. S.—Henry was last heard from in St. Louis.

SEA-GOING SLIM WRITES

Dear Editor:

I am not much of a pen pusher or you would have heard from me before. But there are few spots in this old world I have not seen and visited. Have had over twelve years sea service and am still punching salt water. I started in 1907 and went around the horn as cabin boy to Frisco. Eighty-two days going around and seventy-five coming back. And things were not very tame in those days, there was plenty of action. But what I wish to say is there is no magazine which can make me forget everything else, make me sit up reading when all others are in bed, like your "Ace-High," and I don't mean maybe. If I could only pick up the next number and start right in on it when finishing the old one you'd never hear a grumble. But we can't have everything we want and the longer we wait the more the enjoyment. I cannot give your "Ace-High" the reception Lindbergh got but I'm for it. And that's air-tight. Thanking you before hand,

Yours forever,

SEA-GOING SLIM.

THE ACE-HIGH ROUNDUP

There's a magazine on the market
That I'm boostin' to the sky;
If I didn't get it twice a month,
I certainly would die.

There's a bunch of lively fellers
All herded in together
In a little Mag, consistin'
Of a hundred page or more.

Down the street comes lucky Dawson
He'll bet 'em high and wide,
Jim Dane rides with his six-guns
To puncture up your hide.

A noise like fourteen freights drifts down,
An' sure enough you see
Baldy Sours and Texas Joe,
And their flivver climbin' trees.

Stranger here is Larry Ordway
With his guns and smilin' lips.
And his pardner Old Bill Randall
With his cannons on his hips.

Yes, pardner, it's Scoops Foster
A-grinnin' far and wide,
And his side-kick "Old Hutch Bowman,"
Amblin' by his side.

You'll find this bunch an' others,
And I'll bet 'em to the sky,
In a magazine I mentioned
The name which is "Ace-High."

Adios.

AWAY FROM THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE

Dear Editor,

Only once in a blue moon do I find the story I like. I buy any magazine that offers a promise—but many times I am disappointed. Not this time. This story of Ralph Cummins is fine. Give him my humble commendation. Although my work takes me out many a night, I read many hours at night to get away from the tragedy of life, coming and going. Give us more from Cummins!

EUGENE LEBARON.

Brawley, Calif.

TO NEW YORK FANS

Dear Editor:

I have been a constant reader of your unbeatable magazine. Although we have to pay twice as much for it this side of the herring pond, I would not be without it; as it seems to bring my homeland nearer to me each week. You don't know what it means to be compelled to live in one country, when your heart and very often your thoughts are in another.

Well that is my case. It is many years since I walked down Broadway, and as I am getting to be an old woman, I'm afraid that I shall never see Sixth Avenue again. So I wonder if some of your N. Y. Ace-High readers would care to send me some New York City views and I'll send some of England as I sure am hungry for a look at the city.

Respectfully,
MRS. M. I. LENNON.
25 Station St., Pentwynmawr, Newbridge Mon., Eng.

A "FOREIGNER"?

Dear Editor:

Just a line of thanks and appreciation for the regular way in which I am receiving your wonderful magazine.

As a "foreigner" I should like to add my praises to all the kind "say so's" of your native readers.

Our English magazines seem so poor and tame compared to the "Ace-High" and I consider I am getting better value for my subscription than for any other money I ever spent. I am quite in agreement with several of your correspondents who are agitating for a WEEKLY edition.

I have to-day received the First July number and am more than pleased to note the return of the Hooker Bros. Mr. Ray Nafziger's humor is great and I have missed his fortnightly yarns very much.

I never entered your voting competition for the "Best Story": to me they are all best, but the humorous stories make grand reading.

Will you kindly let me know in good time when my next subscription becomes due as I do not wish to miss one issue of "the goods."

Again thanking you and wishing yourself and your publications the best of everything.

A word of congratulation to your country on the honor you have in "owning" Col. Lindbergh. The World's best. I assure you the English people appreciated his great feat.

Yours sincerely,
HAROLD JOFFREY.

Cheshire, Eng.

FOR X. Y. Z.

Dear Editor:

As long as I have been reading "Ace-High" I have never read a letter with more sense than the one "X. Y. Z." wrote in the first July issue of 1927. I think he is not the only one who saw that letter in the same light as he did. When Mr. Hammersly gets his stories written please publish us one for I know it will be full of the wild and wooly Western Pittsburgh, where men are real critics.

Well, I hope Mr. Hammersly don't feel hurt but if he wants to knock writers, tell him to lay off of the ones who write for "Ace-High" for they can't be beat, and that's no lie.

Always for "Ace-High"

"SCRUBY."

Chat., Tenn.

ACE-HIGH HAS A CURIOUS EFFECT ON HIM

Dear Editor:

Twice every month for the past year or so, I seem to drop out of existence, as far as usefulness goes. (at least that is what the folks say). The reason for this apparent uselessness on my part, is the fact that I have gotten hold of an "Ace-High."

Once I start your magazine, nothing can stop me. I usually read it through and through at one sitting.

I have just finished the second May number and wish to cast my vote for the best authors. The first prize should go to H. Bedford-Jones. He is, without a doubt, the best fiction writer that I have ever read. His stories are humorous to the nth degree and even more exciting. You may tell him, if you like, that Col. John Parker ought to be operated on for those wounds of his before he drowns in the whiskey-medicine he takes to relieve the pain.

The candidate for the second prize is Charles W. Tyler. His stories are always humorous, and like H. Bedford-Jones, have a personal touch because they are written in the first person.

The author of "The Tough Guy" Albert William Stone, should be given the third prize, in my opinion. The fact that the "Guy" won even the esteem and friendship of the cowhands is enough to make me like the story. I know how hard it is to do that with strange people, who take an immediate dislike for you, because you hail from the city. I have had to do that many times myself.

Your magazine is the best fiction periodical I have ever come across, and I have met a good many, for reading is my hobby.

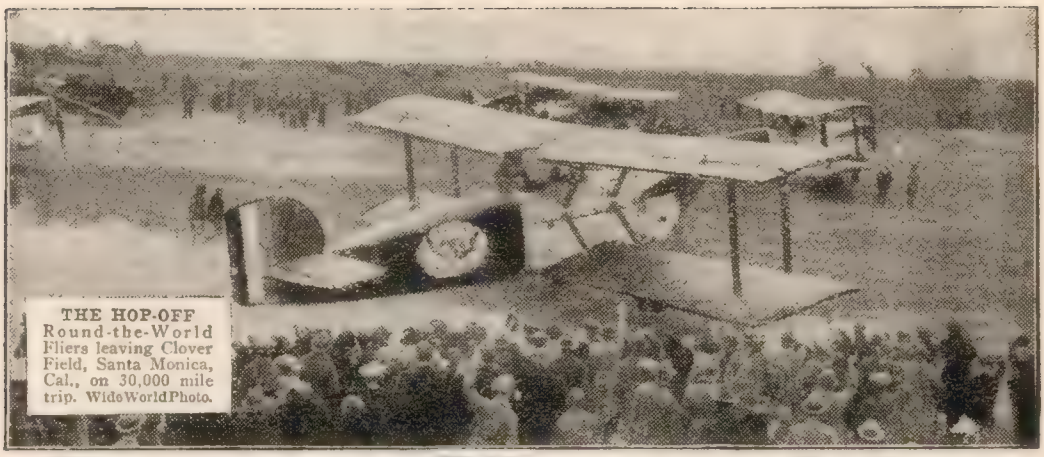
Yours for the continuation of good work,
GORDON MALE.
133 Chestnut St., Montclair, New Jersey.

KEEPING LASSOS IN TRIM

Dear Editor:

I am a steady reader of "Ace-High" and have noticed your correspondence column "Around the Stove." I have been wondering if you could give or put me in the way of getting any information about lariats, as to keeping them limber and free from kinks. If you could I would be much obliged.

Yours truly,
BOB WOODS.
Port Perry, Ontario,
Canada.
P. S.—Rope not leather.



THE HOP-OFF
Round-the-World Fliers leaving Clover Field, Santa Monica, Cal., on 30,000 mile trip. WideWorldPhoto.

Daring Young Men Needed in Aviation

THERE is no field of work in the world today which offers such amazing opportunities to young men of daring and who love adventure as does Aviation. Although still in its infancy, there is a crying demand in Aviation for young men with courage, nerve and self-reliance. For those who can qualify there will be thousands of highly paid jobs which will lead quickly and surely to advancement and success.

PICK YOUR JOB!

- Airplane Instructor
- Airplane Engineer
- Airplane Repairman
- Airplane Assembler
- Airplane Mechanician
- Airplane Inspector
- Airplane Builder
- Airplane Salesman
- Exhibition Manager
- Airplane Contractor
- Airplane Motor Expert
- Airplane Designer

Big Opportunities Await The Trained Man

Look over the fields of work which are open to the young man today. You will find that Aviation is the ONE FIELD that is not overcrowded—the ONE FIELD in which there is plenty of room at the top. Think of it. Only 21 years ago Orville and Wilbur Wright made the world's first airplane flight. Now airplanes fly around the world. Yes, Aviation offers the same wonderful opportunities today that the automobile and motion picture industries did 15 and 20 years ago. Men who got in on the ground floor of those industries made fortunes before others woke up. AVIATION IS NEW! It clamors for nervy young men—and the trained man has the world before him in Aviation.

Easy to Become an Aviation Expert

You can qualify now quickly for one of these exciting highly paid jobs through a new, sure, easy method of training. The study of Aviation is almost as interesting as the work itself. Every lesson is fascinating and packed full of interest. That's why Aviation is so easy to learn—you don't have to force yourself to study—once you start, you can't get enough of it. Only one hour of spare time a day will give you the basic training in an amazingly short time.

One student, S. F. McNaughton, Chicago, says: "Your lessons are like a romance, and what is more, after one reading, the student gets a thorough understanding. One never tires of reading them." James Powers, Pa., another student, says: "I am indeed surprised that such a valuable course can be had from such practical men for so little cost."

Personal Instruction by Experienced Men

Men who have had actual experience in Aviation give you personal attention and guide you carefully through your training. They select the lessons, lectures, blueprints and bulletins. They tell you the things that are essential to your success. Every lesson is easy to read and quickly understood.

Big Book on Aviation FREE

Send coupon below for New Free Book, just out, *"Opportunities in the Airplane Industry."* It is interesting and instructive and will show you many things about Aviation which you never knew before. Only a limited number offered—get yours before the edition is exhausted.

American School of Aviation
Dept. 1187, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF AVIATION,
3601 Michigan Ave., Dept. 1187, Chicago, Ill.
Without any obligation, send me your Free Book, *"Opportunities in the Airplane Industry,"* also information about your Course in Practical Aeronautics.

Name.....Age.....
Street.....
City.....State.....

Magic

Learned Easily At Home

Dr. Harlan Tarbell Master of Magic *who has mystified magicians as well as laymen with his marvelous tricks.*

Astonish Your Friends

Gain that magnetic popularity that makes you the center of any crowd. Business and social success is assured the man who can perform mystifying tricks. You can earn big money either on the side or as a professional, as well as being the most popular person in your crowd. Why envy others' skill? You can learn Magic yourself, quick and easy.

Earn $250 to $1000 a Month

Even sleight-of-hand, generally supposed to require long practice, is NOW made simple to learn. For Dr. Harlan Tarbell, one of the really Great Magicians, has finally opened up the secrets of his profession in a completely illustrated course offered at a merely nominal cost. Through the wonderful Tarbell System you will be able to mystify and entertain your friends with simple tricks taught in your very first lesson. After that Dr. Harlan Tarbell takes you through the entire maze of sleight-of-hand, card tricks and elaborate stage divertisements. The apparently superhuman doings of the accomplished magician become as simple as ABC when you just know how.

Mail Coupon for Special Offer

There is a tremendous demand for magic entertainment. Clubs, Lodges, Charity and Social affairs—all will pay high fees to the man who knows Magic. Dr. Harlan Tarbell really gets as high as $250 for an half hours work right now. Opportunity everywhere to make money aside from your regular occupation. Salesmen find it a tremendous asset. Find out all about this unprecedented opportunity to learn Magic. The coupon brings full details without any obligation. Mail it TODAY.

Tarbell System, Inc.
1926 Sunnyside Ave., Studio 15-67, Chicago

Tarbell System, Inc.
1926 Sunnyside Ave., Studio 15-67, Chicago

Tell me all about Dr. Tarbell's new and simple system by which I can learn the secrets of MAGIC. No obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

DURHAM-DUPLEX

The Blades Men Swear By-not At

EITHER SET ~

$1.50

With Two 50¢ Pkgs of Blades

Interchangeable Blades 50c for package of 5

AN APPEAL TO REASON

COMMON sense tells you that the safety razor with the best blade is the one for you to use. It's the blade—nothing else—that takes the beard off your face. Durham Duplex Blades are made of the finest razor steel imported from Sweden. They are the longest—that saves time, one stroke does the work of two. They are thick and strong—you get the heart of the steel only for an edge—we grind away the rest. They are hollow ground—that gives you the keenest and most lasting edge.

Each and every blade is hair tested before being packed.

The Durham Duplex Razor gives you the sliding diagonal stroke—*cutting* your beard instead of scraping it off.

DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR CO., Jersey City, N.J.
Factories: Jersey City; Sheffield, Eng.; Paris, France; Toronto, Can. *Sales Representatives in All Countries.*

Special Offer 25c

Take this coupon to your dealer or send to us and get a genuine Durham-Duplex Razor with only one blade for 25c

Durham-Duplex Razor Co., Jersey City, N.J. (Address for Canada; 50 Pearl St., Toronto, Can.) I enclose 25c for razor and blade. Check type preferred. NSG-10

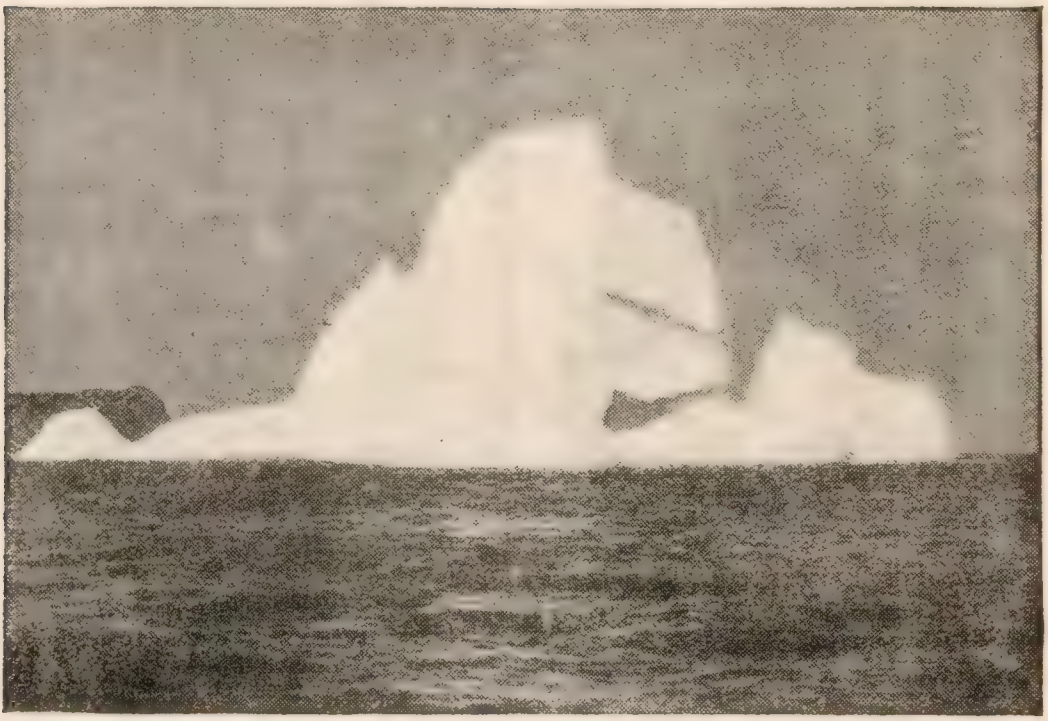
Name.....

Address.....

Town or City and State.....

I prefer Long Handled Type.....Safety Type.....

AFTER SHAVING



HERE IS A GOOD BET

Have you ever tried Listerine after shaving? You will like it.

We are so certain of this that we are willing to risk the cost of this page (more than the average man's yearly income) to tell you about it.

After your next shave, just douse Listerine on full strength and watch results. Immediately, your skin will tingle with new life and vigor.

Then, over your face will steal a lingering and delightful sense of coolness such as you have never known before.

And as it cools, Listerine also heals —takes the smart and burn out of tiny wounds left by the razor and lessens the danger of infection. Go ahead and try Listerine this way. We dare you.

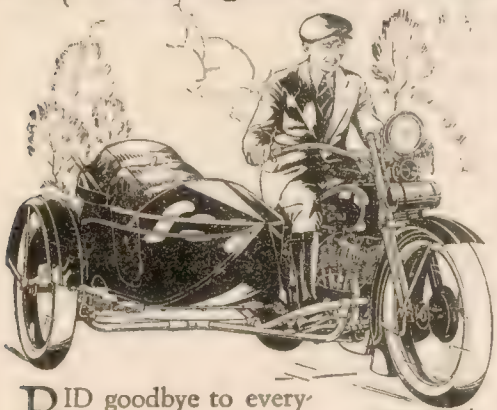
Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

EVERYBODY'S TALKING
Everybody's talking about the marvelous whiteness of teeth after using Listerine Tooth Paste a short time. You will be delighted. Large tube 25c.

LISTERINE

—the safe antiseptic

Follow the lure of the Open Road



BID goodbye to everyday scenes. Forget crowded streets and city heat. See the things you've longed to see. Visit the places you've read about. Hit the open road that beckons to fun and adventure — for a week —a month—or a year!

on all 1928 models fore wheel BRAKE first time in America

A Harley-Davidson Twin gets you there—quickly, comfortably, safely. Upkeep is only a fraction the cost of a car — 2¢ a mile for gas, oil, tires and all. Plenty of room in the sidecar for your outfit.

Prices as low as $310 f. o. b. factory — on easy Pay-As-You-Ride terms. See your dealer. Send coupon for catalog.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO.
Dept. N S G, Milwaukee, Wis.

The Single—our famous solo mount that travels "80 miles per gallon" and is priced at only $235, complete, f. o. b. factory.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON
Motorcycles

Twin and Single cylinder models in a wide range of prices. Get our catalog.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR CO.
Dept. N S G, Milwaukee, Wis.
Interested in ☐ Twin ☐ Single.
Send catalog and full details.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

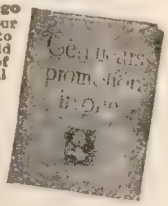
HOME-STUDY COURSES
THAT LEAD TO BUSINESS CAREERS

DO YOU WANT an important, high-salaried position? You can have one if you can do the work. LaSalle experts will show you how, guide you step by step to success and help solve your personal business problems thru the time-saving LaSalle Problem Method. Our *salary-increasing plan* enables you to prepare during your spare hours, without interference with your present duties. Simply mark on the coupon the field in which you desire success, and we will mail you a valuable book describing the opportunities in that field, together with an outline of our *salary-increasing plan*. Also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One." There is no cost or obligation. Find out how the *salary-increasing plan* starts average men and women on the high road to success and financial independence. Check and mail the coupon NOW.

— — — *Find Yourself Thru LaSalle* — — —

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
The World's Largest Business Training Institution
Dept. 1075-R Chicago

I should be glad to learn about your *salary-increasing plan* as applied to my advancement in the business field checked below. Send also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.



- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Railway Station Management
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Personnel Management
- ☐ Banking and Finance
- ☐ Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ Stenotypy

Name .....

Present Position .....

Address .....

TYPEWRITER PRICES CUT

Your choice of the World's best typewriters—Underwood, Remington, Oliver—full size, late model, completely rebuilt and refinished brand new. Prices smashed down to half. Act quick.

Free Trial

$2 and it's yours

Just send your name and address and we will mail you our complete **FREE CATALOG** prepaid, fully describing and showing actual photographs of each beautiful machine in full colors. Tells every detail of our direct-to-you small-payment plan. Write now for tremendous saving. No obligation whatever. Still time if you act now.

International Typewriter Exchange
186-188 W. Lake Street. Department 1072, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS 500% PROFIT
GENUINE GOLD LEAF LETTERS

Sguaranteed to never tarnish. Anyone can put them on stores and office windows. Enormous demand, large profits. Paul Clark says: Smallest day $28.70. R. L. Reel made $920 in two months. Write today for free sample and liberal offer to general agents.

METALLIC LETTER CO., 418 N. Clark St., Chicago

Follow this Man!

Secret Service Operator 38 Is on the Job

Follow him through all the excitement of his chase of the counterfeit gang. See how a crafty operator works. Telltale finger prints on the lamp stand in the murdered girl's room! The detective's cigarette case is handled by the unsuspecting gangster, and a great mystery is solved. Better than fiction. It's true, every word of it. No obligation. Just send the coupon.

FREE The Confidential Reports No. 38 Made to His Chief

And the best part of it all is this. It may open your eyes to the great future for YOU as a highly paid Finger Print Expert. More men are needed right now. This school has taken men just like you and trained them for high official positions. This is the kind of work you would like. Days full of excitement. Big salaries. Rewards.

Earn $2500 to $10000 a Year

You study at home in spare time

No advance education is needed. Any man who can read and write, and think can make good. A wonderful book tells all about what others have done. Shows pictures of real crimes and the men who solved them. We'll send you a FREE copy with the free reports. Get the special offer now being made. Mail the coupon.

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 15-67, Chicago, Illinois

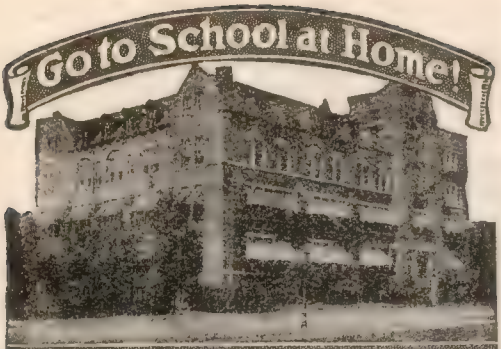
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 15-67 Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen:—Without any obligation whatever, send me your new, fully illustrated Free book on Finger Prints and your offer of a FREE course in Secret Service Intelligence and the Free Professional Finger Print Outfit.

Name.....

Address .....

..... *Age*.....



High School Course in Two Years!

You Want to Earn Big Money!

And you will not be satisfied unless you earn steady promotion. But are you prepared for the job ahead of you? Do you measure up to the standard that insures success? For a more responsible position a fairly good education is necessary. To write a sensible business letter, to prepare estimates, to figure cost and to compute interest, you must have a certain amount of preparation. All this you must be able to do before you will earn promotion.

Many business houses hire no men whose general knowledge is not equal to a high school course. Why? Because big business refuses to burden itself with men who are barred from promotion by the lack of elementary education.

Can You Qualify for a Better Position

We have a plan whereby you can. We can give you a complete but simplified high school course in two years, giving you all the essentials that form the foundation of practical business. It will prepare you to hold your own where competition is keen and exacting. Do not doubt your ability, but make up your mind to it and you will soon have the requirements that will bring you success and big money. YOU CAN DO IT.

Let us show you how to get on the road to success. It will not cost you a single working hour. Write today. It costs you nothing but a stamp.

American School

Dept. H-768, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

American School

Dept. H-768, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

Send me full information on the subject checked and how you will help me win success.

....Architect	....Business Law
....Building Contractor	....Lawyer
....Automobile Engineer	....Machine Shop Practice
....Automobile Repairman	....Mechanical Engineer
....Civil Engineer	....Shop Superintendent
....Structural Engineer	....Employment Manager
....Business Manager	....Steam Engineer
....Cert. Public Accountant	....Foremanship
....Accountant and Auditor	....Sanitary Engineer
....Bookkeeper	....Surveyor (& Mapping)
....Draftsman and Designer	....Telephone Engineer
....Electrical Engineer	....Telegraph Engineer
....Electric Light & Power	....High School Graduate
....General Education	....Wireless Radio
....Vocational Guidance	....Undecided

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Win a Buick or $1500.00 In Cash

I am going to give away a brand new, latest model Buick Sedan to someone who answers this adv. We have already given away many autos. This is the most liberal offer ever made. It is your chance to win this ideal car. You can win it: why not try? The Sedan will be delivered to the winner, or winner may have the full cash value ($1,195.00)

SOLVE THIS PUZZLE

2	21	9	3	11	7	9	22	5	14

Can you make out the two words spelled by the numbers in the squares above? The alphabet is numbered, A is 1, B is 2, etc. What are the two words? Send your answer today—not a cent of cost to you now or later.

$305 for Promptness

I will also give away a Chevrolet Coach, Orthophonic Victrola and many other valuable Prizes—besides hundreds of dollars in Cash—and $305.00 Special Extra Prize for Promptness. First Prize winner will receive $1,500.00 cash or Buick Sedan and $305.00 cash. All who answer can share in cash and prizes. In case of ties the prizes will be duplicated. EVERYBODY REWARDED. Now, get out your pencil and solve the puzzle—send your answer today with name and address plainly written.

WILLIAM LEROY,
Dept. 2287, 115 So. Peoria St., Chicago, Ill.

LUCK

All around you there is abundant Success, Wealth and Happiness. Get Your Share. The "LUCKY SEVEN" Secret Rules are free to all who wear this Rare and beautiful Talisman Ring. On each side of this Odd and Charming Ring is moulded the figure of Fortuna — The "Goddess of Luck" symbolic of Success Triumphant. Ancient belief, that her emblem brings success to wearer in Love, Games Business, Health and everything. Genuine 14-K Antique Gold S. Ring mounted with 32 facet, one carat Radio-Flash Mexican Diamond type gem. Wonderful reproducion of a $500 Genuine Diamond in brilliancy. Cut and Flashing Rainbow Fire. Guaranteed 20 years. Send strip of paper to show finger size and we will send this wonderful ring. On arrival pay the postman only $3.68, plus postage. Nothing more to pay. Yours to keep, wear and enjoy forever. Wear 7 days and 7 nights—follow the 7 rules that we send you. If not satisfied your money quickly returned. Address **Radio-Flash Gem Importing Co., St. Paul, Minn. Dept. 28-LX**

If I WERE YOU-

I would start earning big money in a big uncrowded field. I'd go into auto-painting. The opportunity is NOW! I will train you and put you in line *quickly* for a good steady job. **Make $50 to $90 a week.**

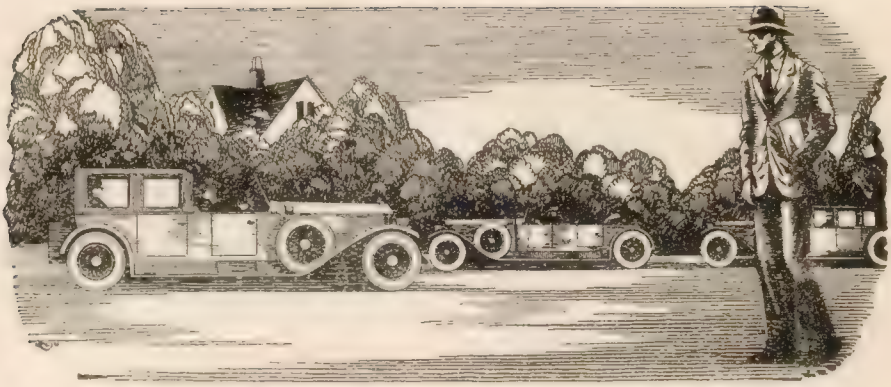
Or a Paint Shop of Your Own

Little or no capital needed. Independence, prosperity will be yours! Let me prove you can have it by my

New Shop-type Method

Actual experience as you learn by working on wood and metal panels furnished with the 13 big working outfits without extra charge. No car needed. Greatest advance in home-training ever made. Send for FREE BOOK, "If I Were You," giving all details. No obligation whatever.

AMERICAN AUTO PAINTING SCHOOL
427 South Ashland Avenue Dept. 102 Chicago, Illinois



Many times in the old days, while I trudged home after work to save carfare, I used to gaze enviously at the shining cars gliding by me, the prosperous men and women within. Little did I think that inside of a year, I too should have my own car, a decent bank account, the good things of life that make it worth living.

I Thought Success Was For Others

Believe It Or Not, Just Twelve Months Ago I Was Next Thing To "Down-and-Out"

TODAY I'm sole owner of the fastest-growing Radio store in town. My wife and I live in the snuggest little home you ever saw, right in one of the best neighborhoods. And I'm on good terms with my banker, too—not like the old days only a year ago, when often I didn't have one dollar to knock against another in my pocket.

It all seems like a dream now, as I look back over the past twelve short months, and think how discouraged I was then, at the "end of a blind alley." I thought I never had had a good chance in my life, and I thought I never would have one. But it was waking up that I needed, and here's the story of how I got it.

I WAS a clerk, working at the usual miserable salary such jobs pay. Somehow I'd never found any way to get into a line where I could make good money.

Other fellows seemed to find opportunities. But—much as I wanted the good things that go with success and a decent income—all the really well-paid vacancies I ever heard of seemed to be out of my line, to call for some kind of knowledge I didn't have.

And I wanted to get married. A fine situation, wasn't it? Mary would have agreed to try it—but it wouldn't have been fair to her.

Mary had told me, "You can't get ahead where you are. Why don't you get into another line of work, somewhere that you can advance?"

"That's fine, Mary," I replied, "but *what* line? I've always got my eyes open for a better job, but I never seem to hear of a really good job that I can handle." Mary didn't seem to be satisfied with the answer, but I didn't know what else to tell her.

It was on the way home that night that I stopped off in the neighborhood drug store, where I overheard a scrap of conversation about myself. A few burning words that were the cause of the turning point in my life!

With a hot flush of shame I turned and left the store, and walked rapidly home. So that was what my neighbors—the people who knew me best—really thought of me!

"Bargain counter sheik—look how that suit fits," one fellow had said in a low voice. "Bet he hasn't got a dollar in those pockets." "Oh, it's just 'Useless' Anderson," said another. "He's got a wish-bone where his backbone ought to be."

As I thought over the words in deep humiliation, a sudden thought made me catch my breath. Why had Mary been so dissatisfied with my answer that "I hadn't had a chance?" *Did Mary secretly think that too?*

With a new determination I thumbed the pages of a magazine on the table, searching for an advertisement that I'd seen many times but passed up without thinking, an advertisement telling of big opportunities for trained men to succeed in the great new Radio field. I sent the coupon in, and in a few days received a handsome 64-page book, printed in two colors, telling all about the opportunities in the radio field and how a man can prepare quickly and easily at home to take advantage of these opportunities. I read the book carefully, and when I finished it I made my decision.

WHAT'S happened in the twelve months since that day, as I've already told you, seems almost like a dream to me now. For ten of those twelve months, *I've had a Radio business of my own!* At first, of course, I started it as a little proposition on the side, under the guidance of the National Radio Institute, the outfit that gave me my Radio training. It wasn't long before I was getting so much to do in the Radio line that I quit my measly little clerical job, and devoted my full time to my Radio business.

Since that time I've gone right on up, always under the watchful guidance of my friends at the National Radio Institute. They would have given me just as much help, too, if I had wanted to follow some other line of Radio besides building my own retail business—such as broadcasting, manufacturing, experimenting, sea operating, or any one of the score of lines they prepare you for. And to think that until that day I sent for their eye-opening book, I'd been wailing "I never had a chance!"

NOW I'm making real money. I drive a good-looking car of my own. Mary and I don't own the house in full yet, but I've made a substantial down payment, and I'm not straining myself any to meet the installments.

Here's a real tip. You may not be as bad-off as I was. But think it over—are you satisfied? Would you sign a contract to stay where you are now for the next ten years, making the same money? If not, you'd better be *doing* something about it instead of drifting.

This new Radio game is a live-wire field of golden rewards. The work, in any of the 20 different lines of Radio, is fascinating, absorbing, well-paid. The National Radio Institute—oldest and largest Radio home-study school in the world—will train you inexpensively in your own home to know Radio from A to Z and to increase your earnings in the Radio field.

Take another tip—No matter what your plans are, no matter how much or how little you know about Radio—clip the coupon below and look their free book over. It is filled with interesting facts, figures, and photos, and the information it will give you is worth a few minutes of anybody's time. You will place yourself under no obligation—the book is free, and is gladly sent to anyone who wants to know about Radio. Just address J. E. Smith, President, National Radio Institute, Dept. M-71, Washington, D. C.

J. E. Smith, President,
National Radio Institute,
Dept. M-71, Washington, D. C.

Please send me your 64-Page free book, printed in two colors, giving all information about the opportunities in Radio and how I can learn quickly and easily at home to take advantage of them. I understand this request places me under no obligation, and that no salesmen will call on me.

Name.....

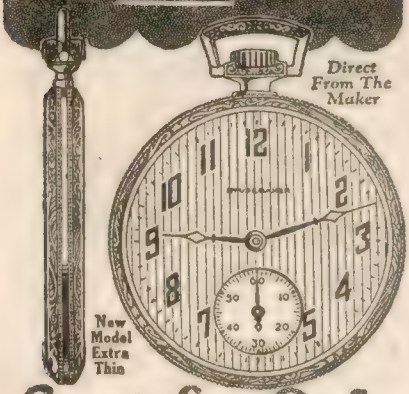
Address.....

Town..... State.....

21 JEWEL—*Extra Thin*

STUDEBAKER

The *Insured* Watch



Sent for Only

$1.00 DOWN

A Sensational Offer!

Only $1.00 and you get the famous 21-Jewel Studebaker Watch direct from factory! Balance in easy monthly payments!

Lowest prices ever named on similar quality. You save 30% to 50%. Ladies' Bracelet Watches, Men's Strap Watches, Diamonds and Jewelry also sold on easy payments.

This Company is directed by the Studebaker Family of South Bend, known throughout the world for three-quarters of a century of fair dealing. 100,000 satisfied customers. Send coupon at once for full particulars of our amazing offer.

WRITE FOR FREE CATALOG!

A copy of our beautiful, new, six color catalog will be sent Free to anyone sending the coupon below. Shows 80 magnificent, new Art Beauty cases and dials. Latest designs in yellow gold, green gold and white gold effects. Exquisite thin models. Masterpieces of the watchmaker's craft.

Studebaker 21-Jewel Watches have 5 adjustments—heat, cold, isochronism and 6 positions. An insurance policy is given free—insuring the watch for your lifetime!

Special Offer: Watch Chain FREE

To those who write at once for free Catalog we will include particulars of our special offer of an exquisite Watch Chain free. This offer is good for a limited time only. Send the coupon at once—before it expires.

STUDEBAKER WATCH COMPANY

Directed by the Studebaker Family—three-quarters of a century of fair dealing

WATCHES DIAMONDS JEWELRY

Dept. W-701 South Bend, Indiana

Canadian Address: Windsor, Ont.

SPECIAL OFFER COUPON

STUDEBAKER WATCH COMPANY
Dept. W-701 South Bend, Indiana

☐ Please send me your free Catalog of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your $1 down offer.

☐ Please send me Jewelry Catalog free.

Name_____

Street or R. F. D._____

City or Post Office_____

State_____

NEW & IMPROVED MODEL BOILER

EXTRA STRONG COPPER

Most Practical Boiler and Cooker

Made with large 5-inch Improved Cap and Spout. Safe, practical and simple. Nothing to get out of order, most substantial and durable on the market. Will last a life time, gives real service and satisfaction.

Catalog Free

Easily Cleaned

Cap removed in a second; no burning of hands. An ideal low pressure boiler and pasteurizer for home and farm.

Save 20%

By ordering direct from factory. No article of such high quality and utility ever sold at such amazingly low prices. Prices quoted are cash with order or one-fourth cash, balance C.O.D. Send check or money order; prompt shipment made in plain strong box. The only boiler worth having. Large Catalog Free.

HOME MANUFACTURING CO.

Dept. 3050 18 E. Kinzie St. Chicago, Illinois

I Want an Agent in Your Neighborhood

I NEED one ambitious man or woman in your neighborhood, all or part time, to distribute samples—take orders—big money savers.

$16.00 Per Day

Benton Fugett made $16.95 in five hours; Jack Foster made $42.13 in six hours; hundreds are doing as well, $2.50 an hour in spare time. Amazing new plan pays you 100% profit.

No Experience

No experience, training, or money needed to start. I show you how to begin making big money at once and furnish complete equipment, case and samples FREE.

Automobile Given

Chrysler closed car given without cost; not a contest. Write today for amazing plan. C. W. Van De Mark, Vice-Pres.

The Health-O Quality Products Co.

Department 811-KK Cincinnati, Ohio

BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL

This well made and effective Pistol is modelled on the pattern of the latest type of Revolver, the appearance of which alone is enough to scare a burglar, whilst, when loaded, it will probably prove just as effective as a revolver with real bullets, without the danger to life. It takes the standard .22 Calibre Blank Cartridges, that are obtainable most everywhere. **Special cash with order offer:** 1 superior quality Blank Cartridge Pistol, 100 Blank Cartridges, and our new 550 page DeLuxe Catalog of latest novelties all for **ONLY $1.50.** Shipped by Express only. Cannot go by parcel post. Extra Blank Cartridges **50c** per **100.** Remember, it is quite harmless, as it will not accommodate loaded cartridges. Special Holster (Cowboy Type) for pistol **50c.** No C. O. D. shipments.

Special Offer
1 Blank Cartridge Pistol
100 Blank Cartridges
1 560-page Novelty Catalog
ONLY $1.50
The Lot Shipped by Express Only
Cash with Order Only

JOHNSON SMITH & COMPANY, Dept. 949, Racine, Wisconsin

Skin Troubles

Cleared up—often in 24 hours. To prove you can be rid of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers' Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin, simply send me your name and address today—no cost—no obligation. **CLEAR-TONE** tried and tested in over 100,000 cases—used like toilet water—is simply magical in prompt results. You can repay the favor by telling your friends; if not, the loss is mine. WRITE TODAY.

E. S. GIVENS, 412 Chemical Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

Building Industry

Motor Industry

Radio Industry

Railroad Industry

Aeroplane Industry

World Transportation

Civil Engineering

$29,500 a Year Made By These 4 Men

Here's proof positive that these four Dobe-trained draftsmen have also made good with a bang! Their yearly earnings total $29,500! They saw the Big Future in Drafting. They didn't wait for opportunity to knock. They reached out and grabbed him. They read my advertisement and sent for my Free Book "Successful Draftsmanship." They read it—decided I was actually turning out real draftsmen—and *jumped at the chance* to learn by my simple, practical, easy drafting method of teaching! Look where they are NOW! And their *first step* towards Success was sending for my Free Book. Let me send *you* a copy this very day. Use the coupon!

$1000 a month.
A. H. Bowen

$475 a month.
S. C. Stroop.

$7000 a year.
A. H. Bernier

$400 a month.
Arthur Dewalt

Learn Drafting at Home!

Men, I say *you can* learn drafting at home in your spare time! That's exactly what Bowen—Bernier—Stroop and Dewalt did! I offer *you* the identical opportunity. Isn't it logical for you to believe that what these men did—you can do? Maybe you can't do as well as the four big earners pictured here—but you've got to admit that it's at least worth a try. Even if you could earn only half as much when you finish my course! Most men would be satisfied with that.

500 Industries Need Draftsmen!

Five hundred and more industries not only *need* trained draftsmen *now* but will ALWAYS need them! Plans must *first* be drawn by draftsmen *before* any machine, building, or invention *can be built! That's* the wonderful, big field I train you for by my practical, quickly learned course. These men have had steady, profitable employment year after year! My easy, interesting, learned-at-home-in-spare-time-training *fits* you to enter this great profession! Decide *now* to Get Started! Write for my Free Book "Successful Draftsmanship." Cut the coupon—mail it!

Mail Coupon for FREE Book—

"Successful Draftsmanship"

Send a postcard or a letter or mail the coupon for the Free Book "Successful Draftsmanship," which Dobe has written for the benefit of all men who are interested in drafting. It's a great book about a great profession—and you ought to read it. These four men are certainly glad they read it and took Dobe's word that he could make real draftsmen out of them. No matter who you are, where you are, or what your job is you should send for this book NOW. You should send for it unless you are making all the money you want already.

DOBE EASY DRAFTING
Established 1900
1951 Lawrence Ave.,
Div. 15-67 CHICAGO

DOBE EASY DRAFTING
1951 Lawrence Ave., Div. 15-67 Chicago

Please send me free your book, "Successful Draftmanship", and names of other big money earning draftsman you have trained.

*Name*_____ *Age*_____

*Address*_____

*Post Office*_____ *State*_____

I Want to Send You a Santa Fe Special Watch

for You to see and examine

Our 21 Jewel Santa Fe Special Guaranteed for Life.

~Send No~ Money

Watch Sent on 30 Day Free Trial

Santa Fe Special Watches are today being shipped to every civilized country in the world, and are probably the best and most favorably known watches in both Army and Navy.

In addition to our NEW LOW PRICE, I will send for your approval one of these Standard Watches, guaranteed for a lifetime of satisfactory service, not only by the Santa Fe Watch Company, but by the Great Illinois Watch Factory. So accurate, Government officials carry them; so perfect and beautiful, jewelers say they are worth 1-3 to 1-2 more than we ask for them. I will send you one to see WITHOUT ONE PENNY DOWN—allow you to wear it 30 days FREE—then sell it to you on easy payments.

WHY NOT OWN A 21 JEWEL SANTA FE SPECIAL WATCH?

You will never miss the few cents a day that will make you own one of these watches—SEND FOR WATCH BOOK—illustrating in beautiful colors hundreds of designs and combinations in cases in the POCKET WATCH, MEN'S STRAP WATCH and LADIES' WRIST WATCH. You can have your name or monogram and any emblem you may desire engraved in the Case to suit your own ideas. Write today for Free Watch Book, and make your selection at once, while this offer lasts.

FREE A limited offer! With every Santa Fe Special a beautiful gold chain or strand of exquisite pearls.

Write today. Mail coupon for both Watch and Diamond Catalog

SANTA FE WATCH COMPANY

Dept. A55 Thomas Building Topeka, Kans.

(Home of the Great Santa Fe Railway.)

Mail coupon today!

SANTA FE WATCH COMPANY
Dept. A55, Thomas Building, Topeka, Kansas

Please send prepaid and without obligation your Watch Book Free, explaining your "No Money Down" Offer on the Santa Fe Special Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

$40.00 Suit for Only $23.50

Think of being able to offer a $40.00 suit made of the finest quality of pure Virgin Wool; fit, fabric and fashion guaranteed, at the powerfully attractive price of $23.50! Can you sell such values? You can, if the experience of 2,500 other salesmen means anything. And you don't have to know anything about selling clothing. We'll take you, train and equip you to go out and make a success of this work if you are honest, ambitious and willing to work. If you are, write us. You'll hear from us promptly with the full facts. Address Dept. 561.

William C. Bartlett, Inc., 850 Adams St., Chicago

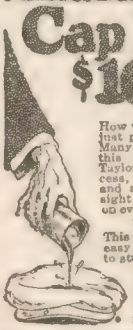
Gentlemen: I'm interested in the opportunity you offer. Please send the facts without obligation to me.
561

Name .....

Address .....

Town ..... State.....

Amazing Rain-proof Cap Pays Men $10 a Day!



How would you like to earn $10.00 a day by just pouring water on a sample Taylor cap? Many men earning this much and more making this amazing three-minute demonstration. Taylor Caps, made rain-proof by secret process, look and wear like any other fine caps—and absolutely defy moisture. Men buy on sight. You collect big commission in advance on every order

Selling Equipment Now FREE

This absolutely new cap idea can put you on easy street. You need no experience or cash to start making big money at once. We supply everything free. Rush name and address for big new outfit showing beautiful styles and fabrics. Ask for special free cap offer too. Send no money. But act today before someone else beats you to it. Write

TAYLOR CAP MANUFACTURERS, Desk A77, Cincinnati, Ohio

If YOU WANT MORE MONEY

Represent Old Established Company. Many Beginners Earn $75 weekly

taking orders for "Style Tailored" shirts and neckties direct to wearer. Undersell stores. No investment. Pay daily. We deliver and collect. Outfit FREE.

HOWARD SHIRT CO., Dept. 54
1213 Van Buren Street Chicago

WRITE AT ONCE

TOBACCO

Or Snuff Habit Cured Or No Pay

Superba Tobacco Remedy destroys all craving for Cigarettes, Cigars, Pipe, Chewing or Snuff. Original and only remedy of its kind. Used by over 500,000 Men and Women. Perfectly harmless. Full treatment sent on trial. Costs $1.50 if it cures. Costs nothing if it fails. Write today for complete treatment.

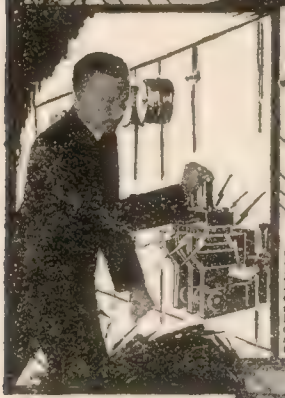
SUPERBA CO. Dept. N-57 BALTIMORE, MD.

FREE CATALOG

Send today for this marvelous catalog of army goods bargains. 52 pages, over 100 illustrations, money saving values, guns, ammunition, cutlery, sport and army clothing. Full line of camping needs. Outfitters for 60 years to leading military, sports, theatrical and society organizations. Satisfied customers all over the world.

W. STOKES KIRK
1627 K.H., North 10th Street - - Philadelphia, Pa.

Switch to Electricity



IF YOU'RE now earning less than $40 a week — if you're short of schooling — if your outlook in your present job bothers you, then my advice is, GET INTO A DIFFERENT LINE!

ELECTRICITY—the wonder industry, offers you big pay, plenty of fine jobs, *and real opportunities for advancement.*

Switch to Electricity: I'll show you how you can—without losing a day's time, or a dollar's pay or quitting your job or leaving home—without risking a penny!

World's greatest industry offers you amazing OPPORTUNITIES!

Even Electricians and Electrical Mechanics are earning $10 to $20 a day in the larger cities. Of course, the EXPERTS are getting MORE than that. And the demand for men who know electricity is bigger than the supply—because electrical construction, installations and maintenance are moving ahead so rapidly, there's no keeping up with them. Yet Edison, Marconi, Insull and other leaders say electricity is still in its infancy, and that men who enter the field **today** have a bigger chance even, than the pioneers of thirty years ago.

GIANT POWER PLANTS demotrate themselves. It takes MEN—trained, expert men to superintend them.

112,000 Miles of Electric Trunk Lines The figures about the Electrical Industry read like a fairy story! Today we are using over a billion Kilowats a year. 10 million H. P. generated electrically. This is the Electrical age. It will pay you to go along with it.

I WILL HELP you get one of these well-paid JOBS . . .

You don't need to be a high-school or college graduate to succeed in electricity. I have placed hundreds of men with limited education in well paid electrical jobs, and I will be glad to tell you how I can help YOU do the same. Mail the coupon and I will show you the QUICK way to raise your own pay as an Electrical Expert, at a cost and on terms you can easily afford.

JOBS $60 to $125 a Week!

There's a way for YOU to become an electrical EXPERT. Positions as Chief Electrician, Superintendent of Power Plant, Construction or Installation, or Production Superintendent are **within your reach!** Mail the coupon for the most remarkable offer ever made to ambitious men

!

CONFIDENTIAL SURPRISE OFFER to men now earning less than $40 a week

I am prepared to enter into a written contract with any ambitious man who seeks a fine, well-paid Electrical job. To help him get ready and TO HELP HIM GET PLACED.

We are now bound by similar agreements to deliver this PAY-RAISING JOB SERVICE to over 15,000 men. Backed by our entire resources of a million and a half dollars.

I will show you how YOU can break into the giant electrical industry, how to qualify for and GET a wonderful position, paying at least 50% more than you earn today. And offering opportunities for further advancement that are simply dazzling. And all without a penny's risk to you, I promise you that.

This offer is open to any ambitious man. Lack of schooling will not bar you. Lack of ready money will not bar you. Just send me the coupon, and I'll give you the big chance to cash in, too.

29 NOTED ENGINEERS —men from Westinghouse, Allis-Chalmers, Western Electric, Commonwealth Edison, General Electric and other great corporations, and leading Universities of the U. S. — helped us develop this remarkable service for preparing and placing ambitious men in fine Electrical Positions. It will pay you to get all the facts of this startling service. The Coupon brings them.

Railroads are turning from steam to electricity. The Steel Industry is 86 per cent electrified. Others are 57 to 90 per cent electrified.

Mail this Coupon Now!

Chief Engineer Dunlap, *Electrical Division*
*Dept.*E768, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., *Chicago*

The American School

Chief Engineer Dunlap
Electrical Division
THE AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. E768
Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago

I may want to SWITCH to Electricity. I am ambitious. Send Confidential Surprise Offer to

.....

Address.....

.....

Age..... Occupation.....

Make Marriage A Success

Marriage always means misery to the unfit. What you are your children are bound to be, and your weaknesses will be increased as you pass them along to your children who may live to curse you for their inheritance of woe. This is the inflexible law of heredity. You can not avoid it. You dare not overlook it. THINK now before it is too late.

STRONGFORT
Builder of Men

Make Yourself Fit

You are not fit if you are weak, sickly and under-developed. You dare not marry and ruin some trusting girl's life if dissipation and excesses have sapped your vitality and left you a mere apology for a real man. Don't think you can save yourself with dope and drugs. They can never remove the cause of your weakness and will surely harm you. The only way you can be restored is through nature's basic law.

I Restore Men Through STRONGFORTISM

STRONGFORTISM HAS lifted thousands of weak, ailing, discouraged men out of the bog of despair, and placed them on the straight road to health, strength, and happiness. STRONGFORTISM has restored the manhood they thought lost forever and has given them renewed confidence, vitality, stamina, and fitted them for the joys of life. You can gain your health and strength in the privacy of your home, ridding yourself of Weaknesses, Nervousness, Catarrh, Constipation, Indigestion, Rheumatism and other ailments, and start a new lease of life. Write me today. Tell me your troubles.

Send for My FREE BOOK

— — — — — — CLIP THIS COUPON — — — — — —

STRONGFORT INSTITUTE

LIONEL STRONGFORT, DIRECTOR.
PHYSICAL AND HEALTH SPECIALIST
DEPT. 389 NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.

Please send me Free copy of your Book, "Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy."

Name.....
Age..... Occupation.....
Street.....
City..... State.....

Tobacco Habit BANISHED

Let Us Help You

No craving for tobacco in any form after you begin taking Tobacco Redeemer. Don't try to quit the tobacco habit unaided. It's often a losing fight against heavy odds and may mean a serious shock to the nervous system. Let us help the tobacco habit to quit YOU. It will quit you, if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions. It is marvelously quick and thoroughly reliable.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a few days. This we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded.

Write today for our free booklet showing the deadly effect of tobacco upon the human system and positive proof that Tobacco Redeemer will quickly free you of the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company,
Dept. 793 Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.

GOV'T POSITIONS

$35 TO $75 WEEKLY

( ) Railway Mail Clerk	( ) Meat Inspector
( ) P. O. Clerk	( ) Special Agent (Investigator)
( ) Forest Ranger	( ) Stenographer-Typist
( ) File Clerk	( ) Immigrant Inspector
( ) Matron	( ) City Mail Carrier
( ) General Clerk	( ) U. S. Border Patrol
( ) Chauffeur-Carrier	( ) Typist
( ) Skilled Laborer	( ) Seamstress
( ) Watchman	( ) Steno-Secretary
( ) Postmaster	( ) Auditor
( ) RFD Carrier	

Mr. Ozment, Dept. 112-B, St. Louis, Mo.
Send me particulars about positions marked "X"—salaries, locations, opportunities, etc.

Name.....
Address.....

Make $12 a day from the start

SELL PIONEER $23.50 All Wool Tailoring

Full or Part Time

Make $12 a Day from Start

Cash Paid Daily

Part time men $5 an hour selling famous Pioneer tailored-to-measure all-wool suits at $23.50.

Commissions PAID in Advance.

Striking leather brief case containing 100 large swatch samples furnished — other equally remarkable values at $29.50 and $34.50. We train the inexperienced.

Men with determination and willingness to work for success write for this big money making opportunity today.

PIONEER TAILORING CO., 159 W. Harrison St., Dept. K1104, CHICAGO

FOREST RANGERS

Men, get Forest Ranger job; $125-$200 mo. and home furnished; permanent; hunt, fish, trap. For details, write

NORTON 2470 McMann Bldg. DENVER, COLORADO

WE MATCH PANTS

To Any Suit!

Double the life of your coat and vest with perfectly matched pants. 100,000 patterns. Every pair hand tailored to your measure; no "readymades." Our match sent FREE for your O. K. before pants are made. Fit guaranteed. Send piece of cloth or vest today.

©'27 SUPERIOR MATCH PANTS COMPANY
213 So. Dearborn Street, Dept. 78 Chicago

$148.00 A Week! Driving Around

Make startling demonstrations. New Vapor Humidifier and Gas Saver. For all auto and gasoline engines. Beats any ever got out.

66 MILES ON 1 GALLON

reported on Ford. Chevrolet 47; Dodge 36; Buick 31¼; Overland 47; Essex 39; etc. Thousands of others. **Moisture in engine does it.** Amazing mileage; added power; faster pickup; more snap and pep; frees engine from hard carbon troubles. Quick Sales—Big Profits—Start NOW.

1 FREE Factory Distributors wanted everywhere. $375 to $1250 monthly. Spare or full time. Write TODAY.
Walter Critchlow, Inventor A771 St., Wheaton, Ill.

You can now own a Typewriter!

only $3.00 DOWN and it's YOURS

Be up-to-date—know the pleasure and convenience of having one in your own home. You'll be amazed at the uses every one in your household will find for this real Underwood typewriter. Every member of the family will use and enjoy it! Don't send a cent—but do get our big special offer—our valuable book on typewriters and typewriting—FREE.

Any One Can Learn to Operate a Typewriter

You can learn to write on this standard-keyboard machine in one day; it's so simple that even a child can use it. A week after the expressman has brought it, you'd feel LOST without it. A trial will PROVE it—and doesn't cost you a penny!

Special Free Trial Offer!

We don't want a penny now. Nor any money at all unless this proves the typewriter bargain of your life. The trial is FREE. If you buy, our easy terms make it a pleasure to pay. There's no excuse now, for not owning a typewriter—and the finest make! We include all tools, a cover, etc., all complete, all ready to write. Write us now. Deal direct; we are the largest factory of the kind.

Our plan gives you the opportunity of a thorough trial before you buy. You run no risk whatever. You start to pay for your typewriter AFTER you have found it the only machine for you! But get the facts before this lot of machines is all in use. Clip the information coupon before you turn the page. It will pay you! Note the very useful book you will receive free! Write for full particulars at once.

The Greatest Typewriter Offer Ever Made

If you know typewriters, you know the perfect work and the ease and speed of a Shipman-Ward rebuilt Underwood typewriter. New machines are guaranteed for only one year; WE GUARANTEE EVERY ONE OF OUR MACHINES FOR FIVE YEARS! If you have never owned a typewriter, start with the finest! You can try this one at our risk. But, the time to act is NOW. Don't miss out on this present bargain offer whereby you can get this genuine Underwood at a big savings. Don't do longer without the convenience of a typewriter.

FREE! Get our catalogue free; lowest prices and terms. A manual free, too; valuable instruction for learning rapid typing, useful pointers for all who use a typewriter, business forms, social correspondence, work for others, etc.

Clip Coupon NOW!

MAIL TODAY!

Shipman-Ward Manufacturing Company,
1887 Shipman Building, Chicago, Illinois.

Please send me your big Free Trial Plan and Typewriter Book, together with your special offer on prices, terms, free course in Touch Typewriting and also how I can make money with this typewriter; without obligation. This is not an order.

Name.....

Street or R. F. D.....City.....State.....

I want 700 AGENTS at $90 a WEEK

POSITION OPEN IN YOUR TOWN

Write me today and I will send you an immediate cash opportunity to make big money. I will tell you how you can establish yourself in a profiable business of your own without previous training or experience. You can easily make $5.00 to $15.00 a day from the start and your earnings will increase every week.

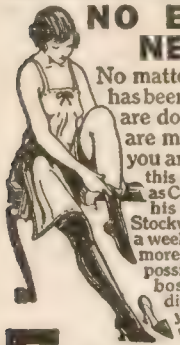
BRAND NEW PLANS

START YOU IN BUSINESS WITHOUT INVESTING A PENNY

My amazing new Plans start you right out making money without investing a penny of your capital. I'll furnish you complete selling equipment to start without cost. It's a proposition, so simple, easy, square and clean-cut, that you are bound to make a tremendous success.

MEN AND WOMEN NEEDED AT ONCE

Position now open in your town. I want you to represent the World's Star Knitting Company to take complete charge of exclusive territory and fill the enormous demand for World's Star products. Over a period of 32 years World's Star Hosiery, Underwear and Rayon Silk Lingerie have been sold direct from the mill throughout the country. We are pioneers, first in America, to sell direct from Mill to Home. The genuine quality and amazing low prices of World's Star products have created a tremendous demand. I need representatives at once in every community to handle the big business. Great Factories and Mills are behind you in this position.



NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

No matter what your experience has been, what kind of work you are doing now, how much you are making, how old you are, you are bound to succeed with this position. You can do as well as Commons, Mich., who boosted his earnings $500 a month; or Stockwell, Ohio, who averages $100 a week. No business offers you a more wonderful future or greater possibilities. You are your own boss. The work is pleasant, dignified, delightful, the kind you will enjoy. You can work full or part time.

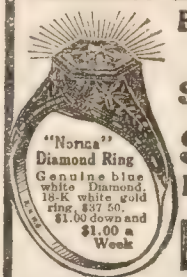
FREE EVERYTHING TO START

For this opportunity I do not ask you to invest a penny. A letter will bring you all details of this great business and how you can start immediately without capital, how complete selling equipment—everything needed, is furnished **Free.** I will tell you about my Extra Service Awards, Cash Bonus and rapid Promotion Plan. Fairest opportunity offered. Write *today* for all particulars.

D. L. GALBRAITH, President

WORLD'S STAR KNITTING COMPANY
1480 Lake Street (Est. 32 Yrs.), Bay City, Michigan

Genuine Diamond Ring



Biggest Diamond Bargain Ever Offered

Sent to You for Only

$1.00 Down

Complete Price Only

$37.50

FREE Big Diamond Book sent absolutely free. Write today!

LOFTIS BROS. & CO. EST'D 1858

No. 49 — Wrist Watch. 18-K White Gold; 17 Jewels. Price only $35.00. $1.00 down and $1.00 a Week

Dept. E 183 Stores in Leading Cities
108 NORTH STATE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Big Money

Selling Ties!

$100 a WEEK

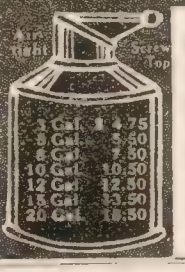
Beautiful silk and wool ties in scores of live, snappy patterns. Four-in-hands, or new patented SNAP-ON BOWS! Show samples we furnish. See how quick men will buy when you mention the sensational low factory prices. You collect big profits in advance.

Samples FREE to You

All you do is take orders. We show you how. You invest nothing to start. No experience necessary. Work spare time if you wish. Send name and address to-day for complete line of samples. FREE! Nothing to pay. No obligation.

NASH NAWCO NECKWEAR CO., Inc., Dept. 10-ZD, COVINGTON, KY.

COPPER CANS



⅜" or ½" Unions

Postage and Insurance Extra

Prices on Large and Special Made Cans and Boilers, by Request.

COPPER TUBING

⅜-inch soft copper tubing, 15c. ½-inch tubing, 25c per foot. Deposit required on all C. O. D. orders.

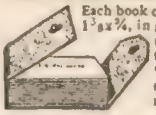
Catalog FREE

NATIONAL CAN COMPANY
44-BA N. 4th St., Phila., Pa

MIDGET NAME CARDS

Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

THE LATEST NOVELTY **50c. Per Book**



Each book contains 50 perfect little name cards, size 1⅜x⅞, in genuine leather case. Choice of black, tan, green or red. A perfect name card. Name in Old English type. Price complete 50c, name only. Send stamps, coin or money order. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. *Agents Wanted.*

MIDGET CARD SHOP, INC.
4 S. Market Sq., Harrisburg, Pa.

If I Send You a Suit

made to your measure from your choice of finest fabrics in latest style, will you wear it, show it to your friends and let them see my beautiful patterns and classy new styles? Besides giving free suit, I'll pay you $3.00 an hour to introduce my tailoring. Write at once for my startling new special offer.

L. E. ASHER, President Dept. 785
Peoria and Adams Streets, Chicago

If you're anxious to earn big money—here's your biggest opportunity for success

Carlton's Completeness of Line Guarantees You a Season of Big Profit

Carlton
Custom Quality
Fifth Ave. New York

DRESS SHIRTS
SPORT SHIRTS
WORK SHIRTS
FLANNEL SHIRTS
LUMBERJACKS
NECKWEAR
DRESS MUFFLERS
Fall and Winter Weight
UNDERWEAR
PAJAMAS

THE Carlton Sales Outfit pictured above, is "Worth its Weight in Gold" . . . . these few words come nearest to describing a line that can actually pre-assure your success with it!

Featured within its covers — ready for Fall and Winter, is the most complete, and as facts prove, the easiest to sell Men's Wear Line in America.

Nine major business winning departments all closely related — irresistible values — count them!

. . . Backed by the one name — "CARLTON" — everywhere renowned for quality, respected for fair dealing and responsible for the tremendous earning power of its representatives.

No Experience Necessary — No Capital Required

Through you, we reach an American market of 35,000,000 prospects. Ever new — never exhaustible! . . . . All you have to do is show our Sample Book — quote our low prices and take orders without effort. We deliver, collect and guarantee satisfaction.

You are paid in cash daily. To those who are ambitious, we pay besides their big earnings, extra cash bonuses, and a 40% share in profits.

If you prefer, begin by devoting spare time — your earnings will soon justify full time to this big money making proposition.

Complete Outfit FREE

Put it in Your Pocket and Put $100.00 a Week in with it!

Upon receipt by us of special coupon to the right you will be promptly furnished with complete sample outfit — prices & order books, supplies and valuable selling helps.

The Carlton Outfit is by far the most elaborate selling kit in the field, and contains hundreds of beautifully mounted, large-size swatches of the actual merchandise. No wonder Carlton Representatives meet with immediate success. . . . The book itself does the selling, while you do the order writing . . . and plenty of it!

Act Now.....via Coupon Below

There is no time like "at once" when an opportunity such as this one presents itself to you. Fill in and mail the coupon — your outfit will go forward by return post — prepaid. In less than a week you will shake hands thankfully with the hand that wrote the coupon.

DISTRICT MANAGERS: The completeness of the Carlton Line guarantees successful district manager control — line up while desirable territories are still open for assignment. Write to-day to C. E. Mandel, President.

Biggest Commissions

25% Actually the commissions plus bonuses exceed 25%. Commissions are paid to you in advance. Carlton's Superiority, Variety and Completeness of Line enable you to run this 25% up to real big money. You have unlimited earning power. Make the most of it!

Bonuses in Addition

Bonuses too! Carltonians are given extra rewards with regularly paid bonuses in units up to $300.00. Your daily earnings are thereby given a real boost. Full details of the liberal Cash Bonus Plan are outlined in your sales outfit.

40% Profit Sharing

Paid in addition to your commissions and in addition to your bonuses. The most amazing and far-reaching move in the Direct Selling Field. Explained in "Earn Big Money" that goes with outfit.

FREE: TRANSPORTATION AND FREE COLLAR

It costs us $100 000 a year to prepay order shipments.

But it is a saving to your customers! The latter is an additional sales feature with shirts priced from $2.95. . . Collars are worth from 50c to $1.00.

Carlton Custom Quality Fifth Ave. New York

carlton MILLS Inc

114 FIFTH AVENUE - NEW YORK - N.Y.

Dept. 100-B

C. E. MANDEL, President
Carlton Mills, Inc.
114 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Mandel:

Send me the Free Carlton Outfit by return mail — prepaid. I am ready to put The Carlton Line and your Big Money Earning guarantee to a test!

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

WURLITZER

REG U.S. PAT. OFF.

Couldn't Play a Note—Now Makes

$100 a week

"When I sent for your catalog, I didn't know a note of music. A few months after I bought my Wurlitzer instrument, I had taken my place in a professional orchestra. Now I am making $100 a week, three times what I made as clerk. I wish everybody knew how easy it is—anyone who can whistle a tune can learn to play a musical instrument."
—*Bill Carola*

Free Trial
Easy Payments

You may now have any Wurlitzer instrument for an ample free trial in your own home. Examine the instrument, note the fine workmanship, the full, rich tone value and especially how easy it is to play. No obligation to buy—no expense for the trial. We make this liberal offer because we want you to try for yourself a genuine Wurlitzer instrument, the result of 200 year's experience in musical instrument building.

Easy payments are arranged to suit your convenience. This is your opportunity to try a famous Wurlitzer instrument in your own home. **Send for**

Free Book

Illustrates and describes every known musical instrument — more than 3000 articles, many of them shown in full colors. All genuine Wurlitzer instruments—buy direct from Wurlitzer and save money. Special offers on complete outfits.

We also give you our Free Trial, Easy Payment Plan. No obligation.

Send Coupon Today!

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., Dept. 2287

117 E. 4th St., Cincinnati 329 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago
120 W. 42nd St., New York 250 Stockton Street, San Francisco

Send me your Free Book on musical instruments. Also your Free Trial, Easy Payment Plan. No obligation.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State* .....

Instrument .....

Copyright 1927, The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

is now more than ever the keynote of success, both in social and business life. Bow-legged and Knock-Kneed men and women, both young and old, will be glad to hear that my new appliance will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently, without pain, operation or discomfort. Worn at night. My new "Lim-Straitner," Model 18, U. S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will soon save you from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 100 per cent. (Model 18 is not like old-fashioned splints or braces, with bothersome straps, hard to adjust, but a scientific, modern device of proven merit, used and recommended for the last 5 years by physicians everywhere.)

Write today for particulars, testimonials and my free copyrighted physiological and anatomical book which tells you how to correct bow and knock-kneed legs without any obligation. Enclose a dime for postage.

M. TRILETY, SPECIALIST
1534 L. W. U. Building Binghamton, N. Y.

Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal

Reduced Fac-Simile Grand Prix

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being mechanico-chemico applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or spring attached—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely FREE. Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

Plapao Co., 462 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis Mo.

Name .....

Address .....

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao

Agents—Just Out!

NEW AMAZING INVENTION

One device makes window washing 75 per cent easier. Washes, drys, polishes windows in a jiffy. Every housewife wants it. No more ladders to climb, no mussy rags nor sponges to wring. Hands never touch water.

Make $90.00 a Week Easily Quickly

Sells fast. Simply show it and take orders. Make 100 per cent Profit. No experience needed. We show you how. Send for Catalog of this and 47 other Quality Rubber Products. Direct from Akron, the Rubber City. FREE Outfit to hustlers. Write quick.

Kristee Mfg. Co., 1070 Bar St., Akron, Ohio

See Miles Away!

Distant people and objects seem close. Wonder telescope opens 3 1-2 ft. long, 5 sections, brass bound, powerful lenses. C. Palmer wrote: "See numbers on cars mile away; see mountains on moon." All pleased.

SEND NO MONEY!

On arrival pay Postman $1.85 plus postage. (2 for $3.50) Money back guaranteed.

FERRY & CO., Dept. 2288, CHICAGO, U.S.A.

Why not Patent and protect your inventions? They may prove valuable.

I have made a specialty of Patent Office practice for the past fourteen years and can assure you of expert service and prompt attention to patent and trade-mark matters.

LESTER L. SARGENT

Patent and Trade-Mark Lawyer
524 Tenth Street N. W. Washington, D. C.

I Offer You $100 a week

If you are interested in a high-grade proposition that will bring you a steady income of $100 a week; if you want to make $50 a week in spare hours after your regular work; if you want to be your own boss, work when and where you please, I am ready to make you an offer. I don't care what your age, experience or schooling has been. I don't care what you are doing now. I need men and women who are ambitious and energetic. That's all.

Here Are Amazing Facts!

I will give you the same opportunity that enabled Chris. Vaughn, Ohio, to suddenly increase his income to $125 in a single week; the same offer that caused L. C. Van Allen, Ill., to increase his earnings from $100 a month to more than $100 a week; the same offer that brought John Scotti, N. Y., $97 in one week; that brings Mrs. B. L. Hodges, N. Y., from $18 to $20 a day; and that enabled Mrs. K. R. Roof, S. C., to make $50 her first week in spare time and $15 in a single afternoon. These earnings can be yours. Read how!

We offer to provide a new Hudson Super Six Coach without any expense to you whatever. Just write for our proposition. Mail the coupon for details of the plan that will give you this handsome closed car without expense and an income of $100 a week or more

This year ZANOL Representatives should make two million dollars. You can get your share of these tremendous profits. You will have the same opportunity as Henry Albers, Ohio, who worked in a factory for small wages. He became a ZANOL Representative and has made as much as $125 a week, and even $47 in a single day.

Tremendous Profits for Spare Time

If you can't devote all your time, I'll show you how you can make $8 to $10 a day in your spare time. We furnish FREE—complete equipment for doing business. We tell you in detail exactly what to do.

350 Money-Makers

I am the President of a million-dollar Company that has back of it almost a quarter-century of successful experience. We are manufacturers of the famous ZANOL Line of Household Necessities. We have hundreds of thousands of customers. Last year we spent more than three hundred thousand dollars in advertising ZANOL Products. Our established customers bought fifteen million ZANOL Products last year alone.

How You Can Make $100 a Week

ZANOL Products are never sold in stores. By dealing direct with us through our Representatives our customers are assured of better values, fresher merchandise and low prices. If you become our Local Representative you will be given a generous profit on all the business that comes from your territory.

Act At Once!

You don't have to pay anything or do anything. You don't risk a penny. Just mail the coupon. But do it today before someone else gets in ahead of you.

MAIL NOW

MAIL COUPON NOW

ALBERT MILLS, PRES. AMERICAN PRODUCTS CO.
7501 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

Please send me, without cost or obligation, details of your new plan by means of which I can make $100 a week or more and get a brand-new Hudson Coach FREE!

Name .....

Address .....

© A. P. Co.

Now You can learn Accounting

YOU WOULD like to earn more money. But what are you doing about it?

The world's biggest rewards go to the men who *know*. What are you doing to *learn* more? Why not start *now* to get the big things?

You can. The Accounting field today offers an extraordinary opportunity to those who have the foresight to reach out and take it. And now, thanks to the authoritative and interesting I. A. S. Course, you can learn Accounting in twelve short months—*while* you are continuing in your present job.

International Accountants Society, Inc.

A Division of the

ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE

To the International Accountants Society, Inc.
3411 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Send me, *free*, "How to Learn Accounting," and tell me how I can increase *my* income.

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

129

Diamonds Here at 60% of Market Price

Free Bulletin lists diamonds as low as $60 per carat, also Gems of Finest Quality at higher per carat charges, but proportionately Low Bargain Prices. This 3/4 less 1-16 carat correctly cut diamond, a snappy blazing solitaire at $68.50. *This 76 year oldest largest Diamond Banking Firm in all the world* lends money on diamonds. Thousands of unpaid loans and other bargains. Many from Mfg cash deals direct with European Diamond Cutters. Must sell NOW.

$68.50
3/4-1/16 Carat Correctly Cut

WHY PAY FULL PRICES

Costs Nothing to See

Any Diamond sent for absolutely free examination at our risk. No obligation. No cost to you. Latest Listings—Unpaid Loans. Sent Free. Describes Diamond Bargains in Detail, gives cash loan values guaranteed. Explains unlimited exchange privilege. Write today for your copy of Diamond Bargain List. Use blank below, clip ad and mail.

Name.....

Address.....

Tear out and mail today to— Jos. De Roy & Sons, *Only Opposite Post Office* 1761 De Roy Building Pittsburgh, Pa.

BE A JAZZ MUSIC MASTER

Play Piano By Ear

Play popular song hits perfectly. Hum the tune, play it by ear. No teacher—self-instruction. No tedious ding-dong daily practice—just 20 brief, entertaining lessons, easily mastered.

AT HOME IN YOUR SPARE TIME

Send for FREE BOOK. Learn many styles of bass and syncopation—trick endings. If 10c (coin or stamps) is enclosed, you also receive wonderful booklet "*How to Entertain at Piano*"—and many new tricks, stunts, etc.

FREE BOOK

Niagara School of Music
Dept. 218, Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Send for this Free Book

New! Exquisite! LOOKS LIKE A $500 Dinner Ring

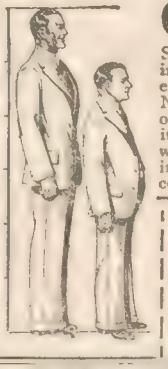
Nine Genuine Diamonds

In this exquisite 18 Kt. white gold dinner ring. Center cluster seven perfectly matched diamonds look just like one magnificent stone. Two sparkling blue white diamonds and tulip shape blue sapphires at sides. Special Sale Price $66.00. $2.00 Down—$5.00 Monthly. Sent for 30 days' TRIAL. Money back guarantee. NO RED TAPE. Relations confidential. ORDER NOW! FREE CATALOG—1001 other big values on same easy terms.

$2.00 DOWN A Year to Pay

O. F. BALE & CO.

11 J Maiden Lane New York



Grow Taller

Science has found the way to add inches to your height. No need to envy and look up to the big fellows. No need to have the disadvantages of the little man. This course makes it possible for you to be on a level with your fellow men. Course is easy, inexpensive and results sure. Mail coupon for free information today!

L. GLOVER
Dept. 193, 70 Bulkley Ave.
Sausalito, Calif.

Without any obligation to me, send me full information on how to grow taller.

Name.....

.....

Street..... City.....

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Enter this profitable and uncrowded profession, where you are practically your own boss, see new faces and sights each minute, and are rapidly advanced. Hours are regular and opportunities unlimited. No need to worry about a position. Our course puts you in this desirable profession within a few days after you finish studying. You start at $120 or more per month SALARY plus expenses. Our contract shows why you take no risk.

Hundreds of Satisfied Graduates

Write today for details and contract agreeing to refund your money if position is not offered after graduation.

JAMES T. JARRELL, Pres.—Div. 13,
Standard Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

EARN UP TO $250 per month SALARY

GOV'T. POSITIONS

Forest rangers, start $125 month; cabin and vacation patrol forests; protect game. Railway mail clerks, postoffice clerks-carriers, rural carriers, prohibition agents and internal revenue agents. For list of positions and how to qualify, write

MOKANE, Dept. 304, Denver, Colo.

The Irresistible Perfume Desir d'Amour

"LOVE'S DESIRE"

This mysteriously alluring perfume attracts and fascinates. Rich and poor, proud and humble alike fully appreciate its charm and gentle magic. Poignant, sweet and lingering as one's first kiss. Lends the charm you need to be happy in love and social affairs. In crystal vial $2.75 and postage. Pay when delivered. Lasts for many months. Instructions included. Plain wrapper.

MAGNUS WORKS, Box 12, Varick Sta., New York, Desk NSG-10

Get Into The Shoe Business Without Investment!

We start you. Inexperienced workers earn $5,000 yearly with our direct to wearer plan. Easy to take orders. Just show the famous Tanners line of shoes and hosiery for Men, Women and Children. We tell how and where to sell. Patented measurement system insures perfect fit. Big facilities guarantee prompt deliveries. You collect your pay daily. We furnish $40.00 outfit containing actual shoes and actual hosiery—a larger variety of styles and sizes than any store. **Send for free book** "Getting Ahead" and full particulars. No obligation. Write now!

Experience Unnecessary!

Tanners Shoe Manufacturing Co.
1510 South C Street Boston, Mass.

Sensational Money Maker!

Trousers—made-to-measure by Hutchins of Cincinnati—offer you best opportunity to make big money cleanup. Men buy two and three pair soon as they glimpse rich patterns. Factory prices. Collect big profit in advance.

$20.00 a Day Is Easy!

Just show line—that's all. You'll write orders fast. Segs. made $33.00 in one day. Records show even bigger earnings for scores of men. $10 to $20 a day easy. No experience necessary. We show you how.

FREE OUTFIT

Send no money for big new outfit showing actual samples of latest Spring and Summer styles, finest fabrics. We send it *free* because we know you'll make good. Ask for FREE PANTS offer. No obligation.

HUTCHINS PANTS CO., Dept. M-150, Cincinnati, Ohio

Try it first for 10 DAYS FREE

SEND NO MONEY

Buy that typewriter you've wanted now! A genuine L. C. Smith—40% saving—easy terms. World's only ball bearing typewriter; fastest, easiest running, longest wearing. Latest operating attachments; beautifully re-newed. GUARANTEED 5 YEARS.

$3 EXTRAS FREE. Write for Special Free Trial Offer and Typewriter Manual.

SMITH TYPEWRITER SALES CORP.
50A-360 E. Grand Ave. Chicago, Ill.

Be a Winner!

My famous "Luck Power Vs. Mind Power" is free to any one who will wear this replica of the oldest Talismanic ring known. Ancient worshipers of Fortuna, Goddess of Fortune, wore her emblem always. Rare charm. Dazzling beauty. Genuine 12-K. Gold F. with blazing, blue-white Diamond Reproduction, guaranteed 25 years. Wear it and follow the

"Seven Magic Secrets"

Send size at once and 20 cents for postage. Pay only $2.75 when delivered. Money Back Guaranteed.

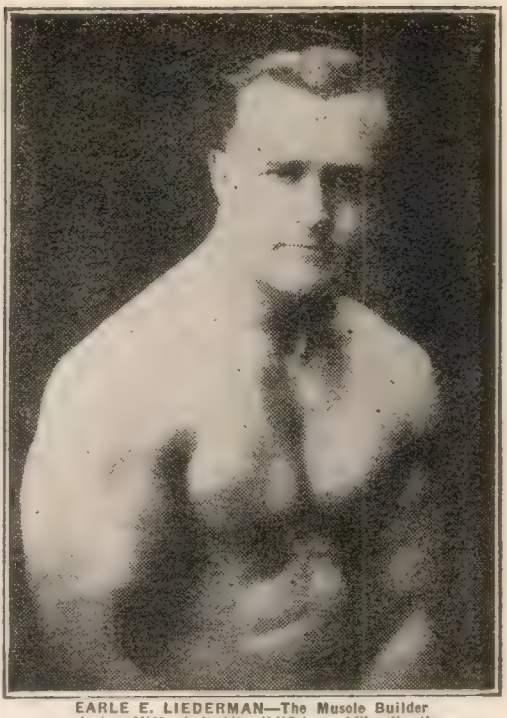
MAGNUS WORKS
Box 12, Varick Station, New York. Dept. NSG-10

A Perfect Looking Nose

CAN EASILY BE YOURS

Trados Model No. 25 corrects now all ill-shaped noses quickly, painlessly, permanently and comfortably at home. It is the only noseshaping appliance of precise adjustment and a safe and guaranteed patent device that will actually give you a perfect looking nose. Over 90,000 satisfied users. For years recommended by physicians. 16 years of experience in manufacturing Nose Shapers is at your service. **Model 25 Junior for children.** Write for testimonials and free booklet, which tells you how to obtain a perfect looking nose.

M. TRILETY, Pioneer Noseshaping Specialist
Dept. 2871 Binghamton, N. Y.



EARLE E. LIEDERMAN—The Muscle Builder
Author of "Muscle Building" "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health" "Endurance," etc.

HOW STRONG ARE YOU?

Can You Do These Things?

Lift 200 lbs. or more overhead with one arm; bend and break a horseshoe; tear two decks of playing cards; bend spikes; chin yourself with one hand.

CAN you do any of them? I can and many of my pupils can. It is remarkable the things a man really can do if he will make up his mind to be strong. I have taken men who were ridiculed because of their frail make-up and developed them into the strongest men of their locality.

I WANT YOU FOR 90 DAYS

These are the days that call for speed. In olden days it took years to develop a strong, healthy body. I can completely transform you in 90 days. Yes, make a complete change in your entire physical make-up. In 30 days I guarantee to increase your biceps one full inch. I also guarantee to increase your chest two inches. But I don't quit there. I don't stop till you're a finished athlete—a real strong man. I will broaden your shoulders, deepen your chest, strengthen your neck. I will give you the arms and legs of a Hercules. I will put an armor plate of muscle over your entire body. But with it come the strong, powerful lungs which enrich the blood, putting new life into your entire being. You will be bubbling over with strength, pep and vitality.

A DOCTOR WHO TAKES HIS OWN MEDICINE

Many say that any form of exercise is good, but this is not true. I have seen men working in the factories and mills who literally killed themselves with exercise. They ruined their hearts or other vital organs, ruptured themselves or killed off what little vitality they possessed.

I was a frail weakling myself in search of health and strength. I spent years in study and research, analyzing my own defects to find what I needed. After many tests and experiments, I discovered a secret of progressive exercising. I increased my own arms over six and a half inches, my neck three inches and other parts of my body in proportion. I decided to become a public benefactor and impart this knowledge to others. Physicians and the highest authorities on physical culture have tested my system and pronounced it to be the surest means of acquiring perfect manhood. Do you crave a strong, well-proportioned body and the abundance of health that goes with it? Are you true to yourself? If so, spend a pleasant half-hour in learning how to attain it. The knowledge is yours for the asking.

Send for My New 64-page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

IT IS FREE—Don't Send One Penny—Your name and address on a postal will do

It contains forty-eight full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over and marvel. This book will prove a real inspiration to you. For the sake of your future health and happiness do not put it off. Send today—right now before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN, 305 Broadway, Dept. 1710, New York City

Earle E. Liederman, Dept. 1710 305 Broadway, New York City
Dear Sir: Please send me, absolutely FREE and without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State.....

(Please write or print plainly.)

"SIXTY MINUTES"

By Raoul F. Whitfield

7,500 feet up—the Field signalling frantically for him to come down—a .45 automatic suddenly jammed against the back of his neck with the command to go higher and keep going—that's the position Buck found himself in a few minutes after taking a passenger for a "joy-ride." And the next hour proved to be about the liveliest any aviator has had since the war ended. A wonderful story, by a man who can write and *knows flying*.

OTHER SMASHING STORIES IN OCTOBER NUMBER

"THE MAN IN THE BUS," *by J. Paul Suter.* The famous McGregor Daunt solves another mystery.

FOLDED EVIDENCE, *by Marion Scott,* robbery and murder at a society houseparty solved by some great detective work.

THE STEEL AVENGER, *by Francis James.*

THE ENDING OF EL JEFE, *by Murray Leinster,* a swift story of gunfighting below the Border.

THE TRAP, *by William D. Bray;* tracking a killer in the Western hills.

In the great **October** *issue of*

BLACK MASK

A Magazine of Detective-Adventure-Western Stories

If you are not reading BLACK MASK you are missing some of the finest stories published *anywhere* today. Get a copy of this October number and see for yourself. We are betting the cost of this advertisement that you will be a BLACK MASK fan once you've tried it.

On sale September 12th. Get a copy early, before your dealer sells out

TRAVEL - for 'UNCLE SAM'

RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS
MAIL CARRIERS—POSTOFFICE CLERKS
$1700 to $2700 a Year for Life

No "lay-offs" because of strikes, poor business, etc.—sure pay—rapid advancement. City and country residents stand same chance. Common sense education sufficient—no political influence.

STEADY WORK

Cut coupon and mail it before turning the page.

MEN—BOYS 18 to 45

USE COUPON BEFORE YOU LOSE IT

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. N-278, Rochester, N. Y.
Rush to me, entirely free of charge, (1) A full description of the position checked below; (2) 32-page book, with list of positions obtainable; (3) **Free Sample coaching.**

☐ Railway Mail Clerk ($1900 to $2700) ☐ Customs Positions ($1140 to $1860)
☐ Postoffice Clerk ($1700 to $2300) ☐ Prohibition Agent ($1800 to $3000)
☐ City Mail Carrier ($1700 to $2100) ☐ Rural Mail Carrier ($2100 to $3300)

Name.....

Address.....

A REWARD of 1000 Dollars for bald-headed and thin-haired

An elegant growth of beard and hair can be produced when using Comos Hair Balsam during 3 weeks. This balsam causes hair and beard to grow on all bald-headed persons or persons with thin hair. "Comos" is the best product of the modern science of this domain, being the only hair-in which really produces hair and beard even on persons of old age. "Comos" brings the dormant Papillæ of the hair to grow again after having been used in a few days, and within a very short time you will have a very vigorous growth of hair. Harmlessness is guaranteed: if this is not true, we will pay to all bald-headed and beardless persons, or persons with thin hair who have used the Comos-Balsam for three weeks without any result. a net amount of 1000 Dollars

One parcel of "Comos" costs $6.—, two parcels cost $10.—.

"Comos" gives to the hair and beard a becoming wave, as well as a soft and delicate texture. "Comos" is sent in a registered package against prepayment—money order, cheque or bank-notes (C. O. D. impossible).

THE COMOS MAGAZINE CO., COPENHAGEN V. DENMARK, 21. (Europe).

MATCH YOUR COAT and VEST with NEW TROUSERS, FREE SAMPLE

DON'T DISCARD YOUR OLD SUIT. Wear the coat and vest another year by getting new trousers to match. Tailored to your measure. With 90,000 patterns to select from we can match almost any pattern. Send vest or sample of cloth today, and we will submit FREE best match obtainable.

AMERICAN MATCH PANTS CO.,
Dept. L. C., 6 W. Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

Be A Detective

Make Secret Investigations

Earn Big Money. Work home or travel. Fascinating work. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write

GEO. N. WAGNER, 2190 Broadway, New York

Get Strong QUICKLY

Giant Chest Expander

ONLY $2.00

Here's an opportunity for everyone to develop big muscles and obtain great strength by using this heavy-tensioned PROGRESSIVE EXERCISER, adjustable from 20 to 200 lbs. resistance. Complete instructions with each exerciser.

Get rid of those aches and pains, indigestion, constipation, headaches, etc., and build up your body and look like a real He-man!

SEND NO MONEY!

Simply pay the postman $2.00, plus a few cents postage, for five-cabled exerciser or $4.00, plus a few cents postage, for ten-cabled exerciser. *Money back in five days if dissatisfied.*

Progressive Exerciser Co.
Dept. 5010, Langdon Building
Duane Street and Broadway
New York City

$2 an hour!

for CARLTON Agents!

Bigger profits than ever, because our Fall line offers greater values, smarter styles prettier materials than ever before! Stunning models from $4.95 to $15.95. Easy to make $2 an hour, part or full time, because women simply can't resist our fascinating styles and low prices.

No Charge Outfit

You don't need selling experience or knowledge of dress business to sell Carlton dresses. Just show the stunning fashion plates and material samples. Outfit and supplies absolutely FREE. Write today, stating territory wanted. We'll show you how.

That Paris Look!

87 Paris models of cloth and silk at a big saving because sold direct. Practically no competition left. Carlton representatives are WELCOME by every woman, in every home, because our values and styles are KNOWN.

CARLTON, INC., 206 S. Wabash Ave. Dept. 375-A, Chicago

FREE Let Us Help You QUIT TOBACCO

We give free information how to conquer the tobacco habit easily. Permanent results guaranteed.

Anti-Tobacco League, Box A Omaha, Neb.

Send Me 2¢

Just a 2c stamp on an envelope. I'll show you how Steen made $7 in 30 minutes just showing amazing shirt bargains. Absolutely new plan. Also let me offer you three shirts FREE. Write quick—this is the big season. Write me personally.

CHARLES HOPE
Dept. M-953, 1220 Jackson St., Cincinnati, Ohio

NOW 10 BIG MAGAZINES 10¢

SPECIAL LIMITED OFFER of 10 Weekly issues of *The Pathfinder* for 10c. The most progressive, interesting magazine in America. Full of valuable information, best fiction, timely articles, current events clearly interpreted, pictures and entertainment. Simply send name, address and 10c. *DO IT NOW!*

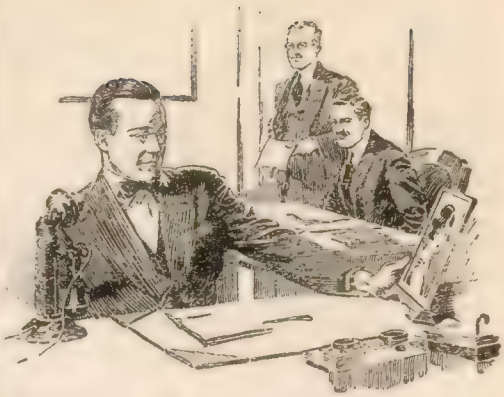
THE PATHFINDER, Dept. A51 WASHINGTON, D. C.

GET RID OF YOUR FAT

Free Trial Treatment

sent on request. Ask for my "pay-when-reduced" offer. I have successfully reduced thousands of persons, without starvation diet or burdensome exercise, often at a rapid rate. Let me send you proof at my expense.

DR. R. NEWMAN, Licensed Physician
State of N. Y., 286 Fifth Ave., N. Y., Desk M



Isn't she worth fighting for?

SHE believes in you and trusts you and she's depending on you to fight some of her battles for her.

As wife or mother, she can't go out in the world and earn the money necessary to support a family in comfort. That is your job.

Are you fair to her when you let the days drift by without making a real effort to get ahead? Is it right to ask her to scrimp and save and deny herself when with just a little grit and effort you could provide her with the comforts and luxuries she would like to have?

Think this over—*then act!* Decide today that you are going to get the special training that is becoming more and more necessary in every line of business.

There is an easy, fascinating way to do it. Right at home, in the spare time that now goes to waste, the International Correspondence Schools will prepare you for advancement and more money.

At least find out how by marking and mailing the same salary-raising coupon that has meant so much to so many other men in just your circumstances.

It doesn't cost you a penny or obligate you in any way to do this, but it may be the means of changing your entire life. Do it now. Do it for HER.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2124-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X in the list below:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Personnel Organization
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Business Law
- ☐ Banking and Finance Management
- ☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
- ☐ Nicholson-Prouty Cost Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ Spanish ☐ French
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Better Letters
- ☐ Show Card Lettering
- ☐ Stenography and Typing
- ☐ English
- ☐ Civil Service
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ High School Subjects
- ☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Lighting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineer
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Railroad Positions
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ Civil Engineer
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Metallurgy ☐ Mining
- ☐ Steam Engineering
- ☐ Architect
- ☐ Architects' Blueprints
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ Automobile Work
- ☐ Airplane Engines
- ☐ Agriculture ☐ Navigation
- ☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

Name.....

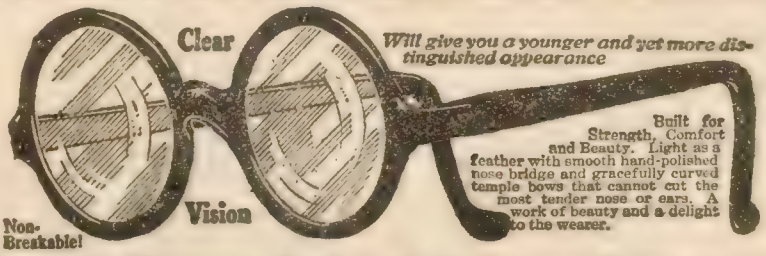
Street Address.....

City..... State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

SPECTACLES ON 30 DAYS TRIAL



Will give you a younger and yet more distinguished appearance

Built for Strength, Comfort and Beauty. Light as a feather with smooth hand-polished nose bridge and gracefully curved temple bows that cannot cut the most tender nose or ears. A work of beauty and a delight to the wearer.

Send No Money—Perfect Satisfaction Guaranteed

Let me send you on **30 Days' Trial** my famous "Clear Sight" Spectacles. Will enable you to read the smallest print, thread the finest needle, **see far or near.** If you are not amazed and delighted, if you do not think my spectacles **at only $3.98** equal to those sold elsewhere at $15.00, send them back. You won't lose a cent. You are to be the sole judge. Hundreds of thousands now in use everywhere. Beautiful case included **FREE.** Just send your name, address and age on the coupon below. **I will also tell you how to get a pair for yourself without cost.**

CUT AND MAIL COUPON TODAY

Clear Sight Spectacle Co., Dept. JD3447, 1445 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Ill.

I want to try your spectacles for 30 days. This places me under no obligation. Also please tell me how to get a pair for myself **FREE.**

Name ..... *Age* .....

Street and No. ..... *Box No.* ..... *R. F. D.* .....

City ..... *State* .....

SEND NO MONEY

Genuine Full Cut Diamonds— NO CHIPS

TERMS (6 MONTHS TO PAY)

No. 6132. Solid Gold Men's Initial or Emblem Ring. 2 Genuine Diamonds 4-100 ea. 14-Kt. White Gold Top. Emblem (any lodge) or any initial (Old English) Yellow or White Gold inlaid in Genuine **Hope Ruby or Black Onyx.** Mention if desired in solid white gold or green gold, same price.

$25

This ◀X▶ Reg. Trade Mark guarantees you genuine diamonds.

No. 6746. Genuine Double Head Cameo (raised hand carved heads): 1-piece stone. **Heavy Shank.** In White Solid Gold or Green Gold. Genuine stone—onyx (nicely shaded).

Send number of ring, size of finger, initial or emblem desired, and ring will be sent for inspection.

Ask for Free Jewelry Catalog

BUFFALO JEWELRY MFG. CO. Dept. NGM (or at your Jeweler's) "The Mail Order House"

501 Washington Street, Buffalo, N. Y.

Exact size of Ring **$24**

Do Your Ears Protrude?

PRIMSET, a simple and marvelous new method, will make them lay back to head *at once* and improve your appearance 100 per cent.

No mechanical appliance! INVISIBLE, COMFORTABLE, HARMLESS. Worn day or night. Use corrects deformity quickly with children, eventually with adults. Endorsed by physicians as best known method for straightening ears. Thousands of enthusiastic users in Europe and America.

Complete Outfit, guaranteed to do as claimed, sent for $3.00 postpaid, or send no money and pay postman plus postage.

THE PRIMSET CO., Dept. 12, 1658 Broadway, New York

Correct your NOSE

A shapely nose makes a beautiful face. Improve your good looks with the marvelous **ANITA NOSE ADJUSTER.** Reshapes any type nose perfectly at home. Quick, painless, permanent results **guaranteed.** Can be worn night or day. Doctors praise it. Send no money. Write for **FREE BOOKLET.**

ANITA CO., Dept. L42, Anita Building, Newark, N. J.

FREE Trial—Money back if not satisfied.

Why carry TWO when ONE will do?

The BARRETT Pen-Pencil combines a perfect fountain pen on one end with a mechanical pencil on the other

$3

The BARRETT Pen-Pencil is a quality product at a wholesale price. Send no money, just pay postman $3, plus postage.

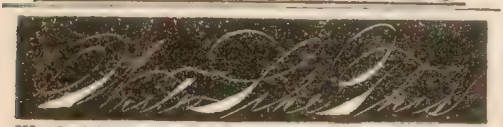
COMBINATION PEN-PENCIL CO,
420 Lexington Ave., N. Y. City, Dept. 2
AGENTS—Write for selling plan.

SKIN-TROUBLES

ANDRE'S ACNE CREAM is Guaranteed for all Skin Troubles no matter how severe or chronic. Brings immediate results. Quickly ends Pimples, Blackheads, Eruptions on face or body. Eczema, Barbers' Itch, Scales, Crusts, Pustules, Enlarged Pores, Oily, Shiny or Itching Skin. Lightens Freckles, Softens and Whitens the Skin.

Full Particulars FREE. Write at once.

ANDRE & CO., 4029 Cottage Grove Ave., Suite 443, Chicago, Ill.



Wonderful, new device, guides your hand; corrects your writing in a few days. Big improvement in three hours. No failures. Complete outline FREE. Write C. J. Ozment, Dept. 87, St. Louis, Mo.

Can You Sell Gas At 5c Per Gal.?

If so write me quick. My Distributors make as high as $3,000.00 per month with amazing new thermostatic carburetor device. Let me show *you* how.

SEND FOR FREE TRIAL

Proof of astounding success and my **$15.00 a day Guarantee to Distributors.**

Frank Andrews, *Pres.*, BLANCKE AUTO DEVICES CO.
154 E. Erie St. Dept. 771-N, Chicago, Ill.

Be the BOSS!

Go into the "Up-Keep" End of the Auto Industry!

Make $40.00 to $100.00 a week

If you want to be sure of a good job—ALWAYS——if you want real opportunities to get ahead—if you're looking for a line of work that pays BIG MONEY—just remember the repair and "Up-Keep" of autos is now a ten billion dollar industry, **four times as big as the manufacture of new cars!** Mechanical and Electrical Auto EXPERTS are urgently needed—by garages, service stations, repair shops, electrical stations. Men who KNOW autos, who can locate trouble and tell the mechanics how to FIX IT, can almost name their own salary.

Maintenance— Now the BIG MONEY End!

They build less than 3 million new cars a year, but there are 22 million autos, trucks, tractors, busses, and taxis to SERVICE—to keep going. And the day of the tinkerer and dub is over. Dealers must have EXPERTS for their service stations, the public insists on EXPERTS. And so any man who will take the trouble to really learn the mechanical and electrical end of autos is "setting pretty." The demand will exceed the supply for many years to come.

But get away from the grease—be the SUPERINTENDENT

Men who have a little practical experience, who can do what the BOSS tells them to do, are always sure of a $35 to $50 a week job. **But $50 is just about the limit for mere mechanics.** And there's not much joy to a life-time of hard, dirty, greasy work. And so I urge you to aim for the job HIGHER UP. Be the foreman, manager or superintendent. Or go into business for yourself. YOU CAN, if you'll pay the price—which is simply LEARNING every branch of Automotive Engineering work.

You **can** prepare yourself for the BIG MONEY and tremendous opportunities in automotive work. No matter if your education is limited, and even if you have no practical auto experience; we'll show you the quick, easy, sure way other men LIKE YOU have found to get into auto work—RIGHT—with the training and equipment needed to succeed.

11 Famous Auto Engineers Guide You to Success!

—men from STROMBERG, STANDARD OIL, STUDEBAKER, BUICK and leading Universities, members of noted Engineering Societies, men who employ Auto Experts and know the requirements for holding down a well paid job speak to you from the pages of this great Reading Course.

Don't Send a Penny

Learn AT HOME — the QUICK, Sure Way!

You don't have to keep a million facts and figures "in your head"—when you know where to find them INSTANTLY. Here is a home training service which brings you **real help** in your search for the QUICK, sure way to advancement. We have made it so simple, so easy to understand, that any man, even with only grammar schooling can master the work without hard studying or memorizing. A hundred thousand men have taken this way to a better job, and you need only follow their example.

LOANED FREE!

American Technical Society, Dept. A-7146
Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

Please loan me for 15 days, free, the new 5 volume library of "Auto Engineering". I will pay the few cents delivery charges when books are received, and I have the privilege of returning them at your expense within 15 days, in which case I will owe you nothing.
If I decide to keep them, I will send you $2, after 15 days, then $3 a month until your special advertising price of $24.80 is paid. This includes a year's Consulting Membership in the American Technical Society FREE.

Name.....

Address.....

Attach a letter stating employer's and reference's names and addresses, or write same plainly on margin.

Question and Answer Service

No examinations, no "lessons," no costly outlits, no $100 or more to pay out, by our method. We send you the 5 volume Library containing the entire material, for 15 days free loan. 2400 pages, over 2,000 charts, wiring diagrams and tables. **Coupon brings it.** You can keep it or return it, as you please. The total price is only $24.80, and the terms are $2 down and $3 a month. You can go as fast or as slow as you please. And you can get any questions answered, any problem solved, **simply by writing in for the answer.**

Start with the Coupon!

Here is the pay-raising service you have been looking for. All the auto facts you can ever need—literally at your finger-tips in the JIFFY INDEX. We'll guarantee it contains the answers to any problem you'll encounter in your daily work—or our staff of engineers will supply it.

Don't risk a penny! Don't take our word alone. See for yourself. Let us prove the opportunities in Auto Work and the **reading way** to qualify for them. Just mail the coupon, send no money—that's all.

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY

Dept. A-7146 **Drexel Ave. at 58th St.** **Chicago, Ill.**

B. W. COOKE
Directing Engineer
Chicago Motor
Training Corp.

"I Used to Earn Only $25 a Week—

But it's $50 to $75 Now!"

"BEFORE starting your course," writes Mr. James T. Summers of Statesville, N. C., "I knew nothing about auto repair work. I have only a common school education but find your training so clear and easy that a child could understand them. I now own a good, paying business. Before taking your course, I made only $25 a week. Now I make $50 to $75 and have good prospects for the near future."

GET ALL THE FACTS!

If you're earning a cent less than $60 a week, get *my Free Book now!* See the *amazing opportunities* for QUICK RAISES IN PAY in Automotive Field! See how men like W. S. Yancy, Perla, Ark., can have their salaries boosted from $30 a week to $90 a week!

FREE
AUTO BOOK
Send Coupon!

The World's BIGGEST BUSINESS Needs You!

Get into this gigantic Auto Business! *IT NEEDS YOU!* Think of it—*5 Thousand Million Dollars* paid to Auto Men *every year* for upkeep alone! That's why there are *so many* Opportunities for *Big Raises in Pay* QUICK for the trained Auto Man—opportunities waiting for YOU! If you want to *boost your pay* QUICK, *clip coupon now.* Common schooling all you need. I help you do it. I give you Lifetime Employment Service—Lifetime Consultation Service too!

CLIP COUPON NOW!

Send for this amazing FREE BOOK *right NOW!* See how hundreds of men who never had a day's previous Auto experience before writing for my book—and others who had *years* of experience—are *boosting their salaries, making Big extra Spare-time money,* and getting into *Money-Making Businesses* of their own QUICK! Get all the facts! Send Coupon Now!

LEARN HOW I TRAIN YOU AT HOME

Don't sell your time for low pay! *You don't need to.* Get my Free Book. Find out how you can become a Big Pay Auto man *in* QUICK *time!* Keep your present job. Stay home. You don't have to leave your doorstep. Master every Branch of Auto Work *right in your own home.* See how I train you QUICKLY and EASILY to BOSS the Job, or GO INTO BUSINESS where Big Pay comes QUICK—and up to $10,000 a year can be made!

B. W. COOKE, Directing Engineer, Chicago Motor Training Corp., 1916 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 735, CHICAGO

B. W. COOKE, Directing Engineer,
Chicago Motor Training Corp.
1916 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 735, Chicago

Send me FREE Auto Book and proof that you will put me in line for a good job as an Electrical and Mechanical Auto Expert. Also send your 4 Outfits Offer. It is understood that this obligates me in no way.

Name.....

Address.....

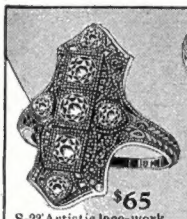
City.....*State*.....

Get the Full Details of My 4 WORKING OUTFITS OFFER

Includes Tools, Tool Bag, Electrical Test Bench, also Special Electrical Experimental Outfits. Also 363 Wiring Diagram Charts.

A Dollar is all you need — 10 Months to Pay

BUY TODAY-the Modern Way



$65

S-23 Artistic lace-work design, 18K white gold Dinner Ring; 7 blue-white diamonds. **$1** *with order.* **$4** *upon acceptance*—**$6** *a month.*

$42.50

S-24 AA1 quality blue-white diamond in 14K green gold with white gold top Ring for Men. **$1** *with order*—**$4.15** *a month.*

$37.50

S-25 Ladies' Solitaire 18K white gold; blue-white diamond. **$1** *with order*—**$3.65** *a month.*

WHAT YOU DO—

SEND A DOLLAR with your Name and Address and brief note telling us something about yourself.

Simply state: (1) how long at address, (2) age, (3) married or single, (4) name and address of employer, (5) nature of work, (6) how long in employ.

All information held strictly confidential—no direct inquiries to employer.

WHAT WE DO—

Upon arrival of your order we will open a 10 month Charge Account and send selection for approval and 15 DAY TRIAL. If price of article selected is $50 or more we will ship COD the additional amount to be paid upon acceptance. If satisfied, you pay balance in 10 equal monthly payments; otherwise return and full amount paid will be refunded.

No articles sold to persons under 20 years of age.

$32.50

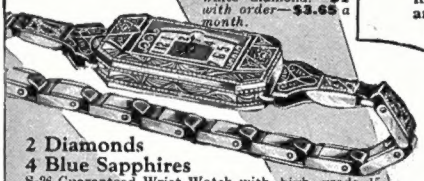
S-29 Five blue-white diamonds adorn this True Lovers Knot Wedding Ring in 18K white gold. **$1** *with order*—**$3.15** *a month.*

$32.50

S-30 Blue-white diamond and Jap carved Initial on genuine Onyx in 14K solid gold Ring for Men. **$1** *with order*—**$3.15** *a month.*

$50

S-31 AA1 blue white diamond in 18K white gold Floral design Ring for Ladies. **$1** *with order.* **$4** *upon acceptance*—**$4.50** *a month.*



2 Diamonds
4 Blue Sapphires

S-26 Guaranteed Wrist Watch with high grade 15 Jewel Movement in 14K solid white gold case; set with 2 blue-white diamonds and 4 blue sapphires. Flexible Expansion Bracelet **$37.50** **$1** *with order*—**$3.65** *a month.*

NOW $39.50

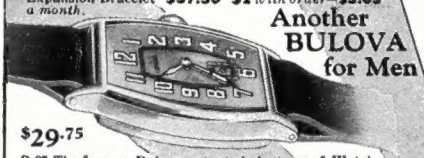
S-28 Over one-thousand of these Rings were sold at $42.50. Saving on increased production makes reduction possible. Three AA1 quality blue-white diamonds are attractively set in this hand carved 18K white gold Ring for Ladies and Misses. **$1** *with order*—**$3.65** *a month.*

$27.50

It's Guaranteed

S-32 Attractive hand engraved 14K green gold filled Wrist Watch for Men with guaranteed 15 Jewel movement; radium numerals and hands. Genuine leather Strap. **$1** *with order*—**$2.65** *a month.*

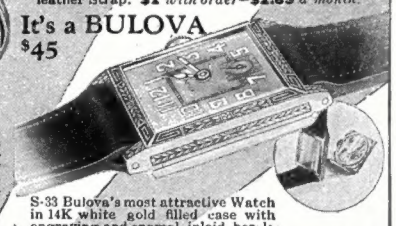
Another BULOVA for Men



$29.75

S-27 The famous Bulova patented dust-proof Watch in attractive design with guaranteed 15 Jewel movement; radium numerals and hands. 14K rolled gold plate case. **$1** *with order*—**$2.88** *a month.*

It's a BULOVA
$45



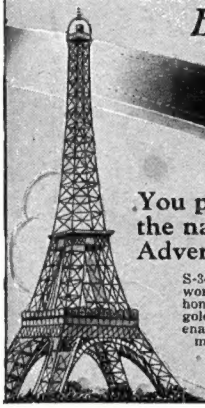
S-33 Bulova's most attractive Watch in 14K white gold filled case with engraving and enamel inlaid bezel; 15 Jewel movement, radium numerals and hands. Equipped with patented dust-proof cap.

Part of "WE"

The "Lone Eagle" Bulova

"My BULOVA Watch keeps accurate time and is a beauty"

Charles A. Lindbergh



You pay the nationally Advertised Cash Price

S-34 It's here—The Lone Eagle Bulova. A worthy Watch for this worthy name in honor of Col. Chas. A. Lindbergh. The 14K white gold filled case is beautifully hand carved and inlaid with enamel. Guaranteed 17 Jewel Bulova movement with radium numerals and hands. Like all Bulova Watches, it is equipped with the flexible dust-proof cap illustrated to the right, which protects the movement. Standard cash price—

$50

$1 *with order.* **$4** *upon acceptance*—**$4.50** *a month.*

An exclusive Bulova feature—the patented dust-proof case and flexible transparent cap which protects the movement from dust and dirt.

L. W. SWEET, Inc. Dept. 1457-R, 1660 BROADWAY NEW YORK

Our complete booklet sent to any adult, without obligations. You can select from it, at the standard cash price, any nationally advertised article such as the Elgin, Waltham, Bulova, Hamilton and Howard Watches, Community and Rogers 1847 Silverware and many other money-saving bargains. 10 months to pay on everything. SEND FOR IT TO-DAY.

Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor"

Give this picture a title. $1000 in prizes

$1000

FOR TITLES TO THIS BLACK JACK PICTURE

8 cash prizes will be paid as follows

1st Prize	$500
2nd Prize	250
3rd Prize	100
4th Prize	50
5th to 8th Prizes ($25 each)	100

Here's fun for every member of the family. This picture needs a title. Perhaps chewing Black Jack and enjoying its good old licorice flavor, although not a condition of this contest, will help you to find the winning title that fully expresses the story this picture tells. Everybody residing in the United States or Canada is eligible except employees of the manufacturers of Black Jack Chewing Gum.

RULES

1: Each entry must contain a title suggestion in 20 words or less and the name and address of the sender. **2:** Contestants may submit as many answers as they wish. When sending in suggested titles, the reverse side of Black Jack wrappers, or white paper cut the size of a Black Jack wrapper (2¾"x3"), may be used. Use one wrapper or one piece of paper for each title suggested. **3:** All entries for this contest must be sent to "Black Jack Titles", Dept. 10, American Chicle Company, Long Island City, New York, and must be in before midnight, Oct. 25, 1927. Winners to be announced as soon thereafter as possible. **4:** Titles must be sent first class mail, postage prepaid. **5:** Originality of thought, cleverness of idea, and clearness of expression and neatness will count. **6:** The judges will be a committee appointed by the makers of Black Jack and their decisions will be final. If there are ties, each tying contestant will be awarded the prize tied for.

Study the picture. Think of Black Jack's delicious licorice flavor. Then send in your title or titles. Contest closes at midnight, Oct. 25, 1927.